

THE DIALOGUE *of*
ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

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THE DIALOGUE *of* ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

A conversation with God on living your spiritual life to the fullest

*Dictated by her, while in the state of ecstasy,
to her secretaries,
and completed in the year of Our Lord 1370*

Together with
AN ACCOUNT OF HER DEATH
BY AN EYE-WITNESS

*Translated, from the original Italian, and preceded by an
Introduction on the Life and Times of the Saint, by*
ALGAR THOROLD

A NEW AND ABRIDGED EDITION



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PREFACE

WHY should you read *The Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena*? Because God speaks through this great Saint to you, and me, and His whole Church. Remarkable though she was, Saint Catherine merely served as a vessel for the Lord's message. In this spiritual classic, God's message covers four topics: Divine Providence, Discretion, Prayer, and Obedience. Each of these treatises contains instruction and inspiration for your daily life as they did for Catherine and her contemporaries.

Born in 1347 as the second youngest of 25 children, Caterina Benincasa was an extraordinary woman that God blessed with extraordinary experiences. Christ, Mary, angels, and saints appeared to her from the time she was six; the Pope heeded her requests and returned home to Rome from Avignon; Christ gave her His stigmata; and God the Father spoke to her as a dear friend.

One reason *The Dialogue* is applicable to you is because you have the fortunate yet challenging experience of living in the current culture. While we have more tangible blessings, more freedoms, and more opportunities to search for truth, we are also besieged with a moral murkiness that seems to worsen with every generation.

Catherine's *Treatise of Divine Providence* can remind you that God is alive and well in this world, awaiting an invitation into your life, into your family's life, into the life of anyone who forgets that God is

omnipresent—not only present to all things, but present in all things, as a creator is present in his greatest work. God’s greatest work is not the creation of man, but the creation of God-made-man, Jesus of Nazareth, who brought from Heaven an infinite mercy upon a fallen people. And thus, the Lord explains that His Providence is most recognizable in the mercy poured upon us. His mercy is so great that if you “carry yourselves with true patience, with grief for your sins, and with love of virtue for the glory and praise of My Name . . . I shall not remember that you ever offended Me.” Only an infinite God can make our gravest sins as if they never existed.

The Saint’s *Treatise of Discretion* can be a guiding light in a darkening world, where objective truth is shunned and relativism is promoted as the moral law. We live in an age where every choice is to be respected, where intolerance is the most grievous of sins, and where our children are taught to condone every act of their friends because it might be “right for *them*.” This treatise on discretion teaches, however, that moral virtue should be our guiding principle in all we do—and there is never an exception.

Our Lord said to Catherine, “if one single sin were committed to save the whole world from Hell, or to obtain one great virtue, the motive would not be a rightly ordered or discreet love, but rather indiscreet.” The great Catholic mind of John Henry Cardinal Newman made a similar declaration in his *Apologia*: “The Catholic Church holds it better for the sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions on it to die of starvation in extremest agony . . . than that one soul . . . should be lost . . . should commit one single venial sin, should tell one willful untruth, or should steal one poor farthing without excuse.” It is the virtue of discretion that can assist the human mind in understanding that morality never grants the slightest compromise.

But it is the same virtue that simultaneously dictates that a soul “should love her neighbor with such devotion that she would lay down a thousand times, if it were possible, the life of her body for the

salvation of souls, enduring pains and torments so that her neighbor may have the life of grace.” It is discretion that shows that a bodily sacrifice, as Christ’s very own, is the perfect sign of love. Perhaps for us this means selflessly attending to the family by cooking dinner or keeping house, mowing the grass or sitting through a long commute, or perhaps it means studying hard to prepare for a greater future. Life is full of “laying down your life” moments, and discretion tells us to embrace them. And if we are to obtain discretion in its fullness, we must turn to God in prayer, which leads us to the next treatise.

We live in a culture where a vibrant faith is many times ridiculed, where prayerful worship is often considered an anachronistic and meaningless ritual. Some applaud prayer as an exercise in self-awareness, or worse yet, self-worship. Even the faithful people that bend their knees to adore our Lord have innumerable distractions. It seems that every minute of our lives is filled with noise, sometimes from without, and sometimes from within. Our Lord explains, however, that too often we merely use “vocal” prayer rather than true “mental” prayer. Be sure that your prayers are more than just words, He instructs us. Be sure that your prayers are words of love.

Finally, the *Treatise of Obedience* is especially applicable to today’s culture where there is little if any formality, respect for the old, or reverence for the sacred. We find our model of obedience in Jesus Christ, perfectly obedient to His Father. And with obedience comes a peace beyond any fleeting consolation the world can offer. On the flip-side, disobedience, like that of Adam before you, only brings isolation, fear, and misery. Remember that the gates of Heaven were closed by disobedience and reopened by obedience—and so will your heart be opened by humble obedience to Our Lord.

God may not speak with you directly, as He did with Saint Catherine, but He still provides you with the opportunity to hear His voice through these pages. *The Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena* is a timeless classic because it contains a timeless message. Our Lord is waiting to

begin His own dialogue with you in these pages and through the virtues that these pages will help you obtain.

*J. Conor Gallagher
Vice President of Publishing
Corpus Christi, 2008*

INTRODUCTION

IT WOULD be hard to say whether the Age of the Saints, *le moyen âge énorme et délicat*, has suffered more at the hands of friends or foes. It is at least certain that the medieval period affects those who approach it in the manner of a powerful personality who may awaken love or hatred, but cannot be passed over with indifference. When the contempt of the eighteenth century for the subject, the result of that century's lack of historic imagination, was thawed by the somewhat rhetorical enthusiasm of Chateaubriand and of the Romanticists beyond the Rhine, hostility gave place to an indiscriminating admiration. The shadows fell out of the picture; the medieval time became a golden age when heaven and earth visibly mingled, when Christian society reached the zenith of perfection which constituted it a model for all succeeding ages. Then came the German professors with all the paraphernalia of scientific history, and, looking through their instruments, we, who are not Germans, have come to take a more critical and, perhaps, a juster view of the matter. The Germans, too, have had disciples of other nations, and though conclusions on special points may differ, in every country now at a certain level of education, the same views prevail as to the principles on which historical investigation should be conducted. And yet, while no one with a reputation to lose would venture on any personal heresy as to the standards of legitimate evidence, the same facts still seem to lead different minds to differing appreciations. For history, written solely *ad narrandum*, is not history; the historian's task is not over

when he has disinterred facts and established dates: it is then that the most delicate part of his work begins. History, to be worthy of the name, must produce the illusion of living men and women, and, in order to do this successfully, must be based, not only upon insight into human nature in general, but also upon personal appreciation of the particular men and women engaged in the episodes with which it deals. With facts as such, there can indeed be no tampering; but for the determination of their significance, of their value, as illustrative of a course of policy or of the character of those who were responsible for their occurrence, we have to depend in great measure on the personality of the historian. It is evident that a man who lacks the sympathetic power to enter into the character that he attempts to delineate, will hardly be able to make that character live for us. For in Art as well as Life, sympathy is power.

Now, while this is true of all history whatever, it is perhaps truer of the history of the middle ages than of that of any more recent period, nor is the reason of this far to seek. The middle ages were a period fruitful in great individuals who molded society, to an extent that perhaps no succeeding period has been. In modern times the formula, an abstraction such as "Capital" or the "Rights of Man" has largely taken the place of the individual as a plastic force. The one great Tyrant of the nineteenth century found his opportunity in the anarchy which followed the French Revolution. The spoil was then necessarily to the strong. But even Napoleon was conquered at last rather by a conspiracy of the slowly developing anonymous forces of his time than by the superior skill or strength of an individual rival. The lion could hardly have been caught in such meshes in the trecento. Then, the fate of populations was bound up with the animosities of princes, and, in order to understand the state of Europe at any particular moment of that period, it is necessary to understand the state of soul of the individuals who happened, at the time, to be the political stakeholders.

It must not be thought, however, that the personality of the prince was the only power in the medieval state, for the prince himself was held to be ultimately amenable to an idea, which so infinitely transcended

earthly distinctions as to level them all in relation to itself. Religion was in those days a mental and social force which we, in spite of the petulant acerbity of modern theological controversies, have difficulty in realizing. Prince and serf would one day appear as suppliants before the Judgment-seat of Christ, and the theory of medieval Christianity was considerably in favor of the serf. The Father of Christendom, at once Priest and King, anointed and consecrated as the social exponent of the Divine Justice, could not, in his own person, escape its rigors, but must, one day, render an account of his stewardship. Nor did the medieval mind, distinguishing between the office and the individual, by any means shrink from contemplating the fate of the faithless steward. In a "Last Judgment" by Angelico at Florence, the ministers of justice seem to have a special joy in hurrying off to the pit popes and cardinals and other ecclesiastics.

For it is an insufficient criticism that has led some to suppose that the medieval Church weighed on the conscience of Christendom solely, or even primarily, as an arbitrary fact: that the priesthood, aided by the ignorance of the people, succeeded in establishing a monstrous claim to control the destinies of the soul by quasi-magical agencies and the powers of excommunication. Nothing can be further from the truth. . . .

Sabatier points out truly that the medieval saints occupied much the same relation to the ecclesiastical system as the Prophets of Israel had done, under the older dispensation, to the Jewish Priesthood. They came out of their hermitages or cloisters, and with lips touched by coal from the altar denounced iniquity wherever they found it, even in the highest places. It is needless to say that they were not revolutionaries—had they been so indeed the state of Europe might have been very different today; for them, as for other Christians, the organization of the Church was Divine; it was by the sacred responsibilities of his office that they judged the unworthy pastor.

An apt illustration of this attitude occurs in the life of the Blessed Colomba of Rieti. Colomba, who was a simple peasant, was called to the unusual vocation of preaching. The local representatives of the

Holy Office, alarmed at the novelty, imprisoned her and took the opportunity of a visit of Alexander VI to the neighboring town of Perugia to bring her before his Holiness for examination. When the saint was brought into the Pope's presence, she reverently kissed the hem of his garment, and, being overcome with devotion at the sight of the Vicar of Christ, fell into an ecstasy, during which she invoked the Divine judgment on the sins of Rodrigo Borgia. It was useless to attempt to stop her; she was beyond the control of inquisitor or guards; the Pope had to hear her out. He did so; proclaimed her complete orthodoxy, and set her free with every mark of reverence. In this highly characteristic episode scholastic logic appears, for once, to have been justified, at perilous odds, of her children. . . .

* * *

MIDWAY between sky and earth hangs a City Beautiful: Siena, *Vetus Civitas Virginis*. The town seems to have descended as a bride from airy regions, and lightly settled on the summits of three hills which it crowns with domes and clustering towers. As seen from the vineyards which clothe the slopes of the hills or with its crenellated wall and slender-necked Campanile silhouetted against the evening sky from the neighboring heights of Belcaro, the city is familiar to students of the early Italian painters. It forms the fantastic and solemn background of many a masterpiece of the *trecentisti*, and seems the only possible home, if home they can have on earth, of the glorified persons who occupy the foreground. It would create no surprise to come, while walking round the ancient walls, suddenly, at a turn in the road, on one of the sacred groups so familiarly recurrent to the memory in such an environment: often indeed one experiences a curious illusion when a passing friar happens for a moment to "compose" with cypress and crumbling archway.

Siena, once the successful rival of Florence in commerce, war, and politics, has, fortunately for the more vital interests which it represents, long desisted from such minor matters. Its worldly ruin has been com-

plete for more than five hundred years; in truth the town has never recovered from the plague which, in the far-off days of 1348, carried off 80,000 of its population. Grassy mounds within the city walls mark the shrinking of the town since the date of their erection, and Mr. Murray gives its present population at less than 23,000. The free Ghibelline Republic which, on that memorable 4th of September 1260, defeated, with the help of Pisa, at Monte Aperto, the combined forces of the Guelf party in Tuscany, has now, after centuries of servitude to Spaniard and Austrian, to be content with the somewhat pinchbeck dignity of an Italian Prefettura. At least the architectural degradation which has overtaken Florence at the hands of her modern rulers has been as yet, in great measure, spared to Siena. Even the railway has had the grace to conceal its presence in the folds of olive which enwrap the base of the hill on which the city is set.

Once inside the rose-colored walls, as we pass up the narrow, roughly-paved streets between lines of palaces, some grim and massive like Casa Tolomei, built in 1205, others delicate specimens of Italian Gothic like the Palazzo Saracini, others again illustrating the combination of grace and strength which marked the domestic architecture of the Renaissance at its prime, like the Palazzo Piccolomini, we find ourselves in a world very remote indeed from anything with which the experience of our own utilitarian century makes us familiar. And yet, as we rub our eyes, unmistakably a world of facts, though of facts, as it were, visibly interpreted by the deeper truth of an art whose insistent presence is on all sides of us. Here is Casa Tolomei, a huge cube of rough-hewn stone stained to the color of tarnished silver with age, once the home of that Madonna Pia whose story lives for ever in the verse of Dante. Who shall distinguish between her actual tale of days and the immortal life given her by the poet? In her moment of suffering at least she has been made eternal. And not far from that ancient fortress-home, in a winding alley that can hardly be called a street, is another house of medieval Siena—no palace this time, but a small tradesman's dwelling. In the fourteenth century it belonged to

Ser Giacomo Benincasa, a dyer. Part of it has now been converted into a chapel, over the door of which are inscribed the words: *Sponsae Xti Katerinae Domus*. Here, on March 5, 1347, being Palm Sunday, was born Giacomo's daughter Caterina, who still lives one of the purest glories of the Christian Church under the name of St. Catherine of Siena. More than 500 years have passed since the daughter of the Siennese dyer entered into the rest of that sublime and touching symbolism under which the Church half veils and half reveals her teaching as to the destiny of man. Another case, but how profoundly more significant than that of poor Madonna Pia, of the intertwining of the world of fact with the deeper truth of art.

St. Catherine was born at the same time as a twin-sister, who did not survive. Her parents, Giacomo and Lapa Benincasa, were simple townspeople, prosperous, and apparently deserving their reputation for piety. Lapa, the daughter of one Mucio Piagenti, a now wholly forgotten poet, bore twenty-five children to her husband, of whom thirteen only appear to have grown up. This large family lived together in the manner still obtaining in Italy, in the little house, till the death of Giacomo in 1368.

There are stirring pages enough in Christian hagiology. Who can read unmoved of the struggles towards his ideal of an Augustine or a Loyola, or of the heroic courage of a Theresa, affirming against all human odds the divinity of her mission, and justifying, after years of labor, her incredible assertions by the steadfastness of her will? There are other pages in the lives of the saints, less dramatic, it may be, but breathing, nevertheless, a naïve grace and poetry all their own: the childhood of those servants of Christ who have borne His yoke from the dawn of their days forms their charming theme. Here the blasting illuminations of the Revelation are toned down to a soft and tender glow, in which the curves and lines of natural humanity do but seem more pathetically human. The hymn at Lauds for the Feast of the Holy Innocents represents those unconscious martyrs as playing with their palms and crowns under the very altar of Heaven:

“Vos prima Christi victima
Grege immolatorum tener
Aram sub ipsam simplices
Palma et coronis luditis!”

And so these other saintly babies play at hermits or monasteries instead of the soldiers and housekeeping beloved of more secular-minded infants. Heaven condescends to their pious revels: we are told of the Blessed Hermann Joseph, the Premonstratensian, that his infantile sports were joyously shared by the Divine Child Himself. He would be a morose pedant indeed who should wish to rationalize this white mythology. The tiny Catherine was no exception to the rest of her canonized brothers and sisters. At the age of five it was her custom on the staircase to kneel and repeat a “Hail Mary” at each step, a devotion so pleasing to the angels, that they would frequently carry her up or down without letting her feet touch the ground, much to the alarm of her mother, who confided to Father Raymond of Capua, the Dominican confessor of the family, her fears of an accident. Nor were these phenomena the only reward of her infant piety. From the day that she could walk she became very popular among her numerous relatives and her parents’ friends, who gave her the pet name of Euphrosyne, to signify the grief-dispelling effect of her conversation, and who were constantly inviting her to their houses on some pretext or other. Sent one morning on an errand to the house of her married sister Bonaventura, she was favored with a beautiful vision which, as it has an important symbolical bearing on the great task of her afterlife, I will relate in Father Raymond’s words, slightly abridging their prolixity.

“So it happened that Catherine, being arrived at the age of six, went one day with her brother Stephen, who was a little older than herself, to the house of their sister Bonaventura, who was married to one Niccolò, as has been mentioned above, in order to carry something or give some message from their mother Lapa. Their mother’s errand accomplished, while they were on the way back from their sister’s house to their own

and were passing along a certain valley, called by the people Valle Piatta, the holy child, lifting her eyes, saw on the opposite side above the Church of the Preaching Friars a most beautiful room, adorned with regal magnificence, in which was seated, on an imperial throne, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, clothed in pontifical vestments, and wearing on His head a papal tiara; with Him were the princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, and the holy evangelist John. Astounded at such a sight, Catherine stood still, and with fixed and immovable look, gazed, full of love, on her Saviour, who, appearing in so marvellous a manner, in order sweetly to gain her love to Himself, fixed on her the eyes of His Majesty, and, with a tender smile, lifted over her His right hand, and, making the Sign of the Holy Cross in the manner of a bishop, left with her the gift of His eternal benediction. The grace of this gift was so efficacious, that Catherine, beside herself, and transformed into Him upon whom she gazed with such love, forgetting not only the road she was on, but also herself, although naturally a timid child, stood still for a space with lifted and immovable eyes in the public road, where men and beasts were continually passing, and would certainly have continued to stand there as long as the vision lasted, had she not been violently diverted by others. But while the Lord was working these marvels, the child Stephen, leaving her standing still, continued his way downhill, thinking that she was following, but, seeing her immovable in the distance and paying no heed to his calls, he returned and pulled her with his hands, saying: 'What are you doing here? Why do you not come?' Then Catherine, as if waking from a heavy sleep, lowered her eyes and said: 'Oh, if you had seen what I see, you would not distract me from so sweet a vision!' and lifted her eyes again on high; but the vision had entirely disappeared, according to the Will of Him who had granted it, and she, not being able to endure this without pain, began with tears to reproach herself for having turned her eyes to earth." Such was the "call" of St. Catherine of Siena, and, to a mind intent on mystical significance, the appearance of Christ, in the semblance of His Vicar, may fitly appear to symbolize the great mission of her afterlife to the Holy See.

* * *

MUCH might be said of the action of Catherine on her generation. Few individuals perhaps have ever led so active a life or have succeeded in leaving so remarkable an imprint of their personality on the events of their time. Catherine the Peacemaker reconciles warring factions of her native city and heals an international feud between Florence and the Holy See. Catherine the Consoler pours the balm of her gentle spirit into the lacerated souls of the suffering wherever she finds them, in the condemned cell or in the hospital ward. She is one of the most voluminous of letter-writers, keeping up a constant correspondence with a band of disciples, male and female, all over Italy, and last, but not least, with the distant Pope at Avignon.

Her lot was cast on evil days for the Church and the Peninsula. The trecento, the apogee of the middle ages was over. Francis and Dominic had come and gone, and though Franciscans and Dominicans remained and numbered saints among their ranks, still the first fervor of the original inspiration was a brightness that had fled. The moral state of the secular clergy was, according to Catherine herself, too often one of the deepest degradation, while, in the absence of the Pontiff, the States of the Church were governed by papal legates, mostly men of blood and lust, who ground the starving people under their heel. Assuredly it was not from Christian bishops who would have disgraced Islam that their subjects could learn the path of peace. The Pope's residence at Avignon, the Babylonish Captivity, as it was called, may have seemed, at the time when his departure from Rome was resolved upon, a wise measure of temporary retreat before the anarchy which was raging round the city of St. Peter. But not many years passed before it became evident that Philip the Fair, the astute adviser to whose counsel—and possibly more than counsel—Clement had submitted in leaving Rome, was the only one who profited by the exile of the Pope. Whatever the truth may be about the details of Clement's election, so far as his subserviency to the French king went, he might have remained Archbishop of Bordeaux to the end

of his days. He accepted for his relations costly presents from Philip; he placed the papal authority at his service in the gravely suspicious matter of the suppression of the Templars. Gradually the Holy See in exile lost its ecumenical character and became more and more the vassal of the French crown. Such a decline in its position could not fail to affect even its doctrinal prestige. It was well enough in theory to apply to the situation such maxims as *Ubi Petrus ibi Ecclesia*, or, as the Avignonese doctors paraphrased it, *Ubi Papa ibi Roma*; but, in practice, Christendom grew shy of a French Pope, living under the eye and power of the French king. The Romans, who had always treated the Pope badly, were furious when at last they had driven him away, and gratified their spite by insulting their exiled rulers. Nothing could exceed their contempt for the Popes of Avignon, who, as a matter of fact, though weak and compliant, were in their personal characters worthy ecclesiastics. They gave no credit to John XXII for his genuine zeal in the cause of learning, or the energy with which he restored ecclesiastical studies in the Western Schools. For Benedict XII, a retiring and abstemious student, they invented the phrase: *bibere papaliter*—to drink like the Pope. Clement VI they called *poco religioso*, forgetting his noble charity at the time of the plague, and also the fact that Rome herself had produced not a few popes whose lives furnished a singular commentary on the ethics of the Gospel.

The real danger ahead to Christendom was the possibility of an Italian anti-Pope who should fortify his position by recourse to the heretical elements scattered through the peninsula. Those elements were grave and numerous. The Fraticelli or Spiritual Franciscans, although crushed for the time by the iron hand of Pope Boniface, rather flourished than otherwise under persecution. These dangerous heretics had inherited a garbled version of the mysticism of Joachim of Flora, which constituted a doctrine perhaps more radically revolutionary than that of any heretics before or since. It amounted to belief in a new revelation of the Spirit, which was to supersede the dispensation of the Son as that had taken the place of the dispensation of the Father. According to the Eternal Gospel of Gerard of San Donnino, who had

derived it, not without much adroit manipulation, from the writings of Abbot Joachim, the Roman Church was on the eve of destruction, and it was the duty of the *Spirituali*, the saints who had received the new dispensation, to fly from the contamination of her communion. An anti-Pope who should have rallied to his allegiance these elements of schism would have been a dangerous rival to a French Pope residing in distant Avignon, however legitimate his title. Nor was there wanting outside Italy matter for grave anxiety. Germs of heresy were fermenting north of the Alps; the preaching of Wycliffe, the semi-Islamism of the Hungarian Beghards, the Theism of the Patarini of Dalmatia, the erotic mysticism of the Adamites of Paris, indicated a widespread anarchy in the minds of Christians. Moreover, the spiritual difficulties of the Pope were complicated by his temporal preoccupations. For good or ill, it had come to be essential to the action of the Holy See that the successor of the penniless fisherman should have his place among the princes of the earth.

The papal monarchy had come about, as most things come about in this world, by what seems to have been the inevitable force of circumstances. The decay of the Imperial power in Italy due to the practical abandonment of the Western Empire—for the ruler of Constantinople lived at too great a distance to be an effective Emperor of the West—had resulted in a natural increase of secular importance to the See of Rome. To the genius of Pope Gregory I, one of the few men whom their fellows have named both Saint and Great, was due the development of the political situation thus created in Italy.

Chief and greatest of Bishops in his day was St. Gregory the Great. Seldom, if ever, has the papal dignity been sustained with such lofty enthusiasm, such sagacious political insight. Himself a Roman of Rome, *Romano di Roma*, as those who possess that privilege still call themselves today, the instinct of government was his by hereditary right. He had the defects as well as the qualities of the statesman. His theological writings, which are voluminous and verbose, are marked rather by a sort of canonized common sense than by exalted flights of spirituality.

His missionary enterprise was characterized by a shrewd and gracious condescension to the limitations of human nature. Thus he counsels St. Augustine, who had consulted him as to the best means of extirpating the pagan customs of our English forefathers, to deal gently with these ancient survivals. He ruled that the celebration of the Festivals of the Saints should if possible be held at the times and places at which the people had been in the habit of meeting together to worship the gods. They would thus come to associate the new religion with their traditional merry-makings, and their conversion would be gradually, and as it were unconsciously, effected. It was a kindly and statesman-like thought. In this way Gregory may truly be looked upon as the founder of popular Catholicism, that "pensive use and wont religion," not assuredly in the entirety of its details Christian, but at least profoundly Catholic, as weaving together in the web of its own secular experience of man so large a proportion of the many-colored threads that have at any time attached his hopes and fears to the mysterious unknown which surrounds him. No miracle is needed to explain the political ascendancy which such a man inevitably came to acquire in an Italy deserted by the Empire, and, but for him and the organization which depended on him, at the mercy of the invading Lombard. More and more, people came to look on the Pope as their temporal ruler no less than as their spiritual father. In many cases, indeed, his was the only government they knew. Kings and nobles had conferred much property on the Roman Church. By the end of the sixth century the Bishop of Rome held, by the right of such donations to his See, large tracts of country, not only in Italy, but also in Sicily, Corsica, Gaul, and even Asia and Africa. Gregory successfully defended his Italian property against the invaders, and came to the relief of the starving population with corn from Sicily and Africa, thus laying deep in the hearts of the people the foundations of the secular power of the Papacy.

It would be an unnecessary digression from our subject to work out in detail the stages by which the Pope came to take his place first as the Italian vicar of a distant emperor, and at length, as the result of astute

statecraft and the necessities of the case, among the princes of Europe, as their chief and arbiter. So much as has been said was, however, necessary for the comprehension of the task with which Catherine measured, for the time, successfully her strength. It was given to the Popolana of Siena, by the effect of her eloquence in persuading the wavering will of the Pope to return to his See, to bring about what was, for the moment, the only possible solution of that Roman question, which, hanging perpetually round the skirts of the Bride of Christ, seems at every step to impede her victorious advance.

* * *

NEVERTHELESS, it is neither the intrinsic importance nor the social consequences of her actions that constitute the true greatness of St. Catherine. Great ends may be pursued by essentially small means, in an aridity and narrowness of temper that goes far to discount their actual achievement. History, and in particular the history of the Church, is not wanting in such instances. Savonarola set great ends before himself—the freedom of his country and the regeneration of the state; but the spirit in which he pursued them excludes him from that Pantheon of gracious souls in which humanity enshrines its true benefactors. “Soul, as a quality of style, is a fact,” and the soul of St. Catherine’s *gesta* expressed itself in a “style” so winning, so sweetly reasonable, as to make her the dearest of friends to all who had the privilege of intimate association with her, and a permanent source of refreshment to the human spirit. She intuitively perceived life under the highest possible forms, the forms of Beauty and Love. Truth and Goodness were, she thought, means for the achievement of those two supreme ends. The sheer beauty of the soul “in a state of Grace” is a point on which she constantly dwells, hanging it as a bait before those whom she would induce to turn from evil. Similarly the ugliness of sin, as much as its wickedness, should warn us of its true nature. Love, that love of man for man which, in deepest truth, *is*, in the words of the writer of the First Epistle of St. John, God Himself, is, at once, the

highest achievement of man and his supreme and satisfying beatitude. The Symbols of Catholic theology were to her the necessary and fitting means of transit, so to speak. See, in the following pages, the fine allegory of the Bridge of the Sacred Humanity, of the soul in *viâ* on its dusty pilgrimage toward those gleaming heights of vision. "Truth" was to her the handmaid of the spiritualized imagination, not, as too often in these days of the twilight of the soul, its tyrant and its gaoler. Many of those who pass lives of unremitting preoccupation with the problems of truth and goodness are wearied and cumbered with much serving. We honor them, and rightly; but if they have nothing but this to offer us, our hearts do not run to meet them, as they fly to the embrace of those rare souls who inhabit a serener, more pellucid atmosphere. Among these spirits of the air, St. Catherine has taken a permanent and foremost place. She is among the few guides of humanity who have the perfect manner, the irresistible attractiveness, of that positive purity of heart, which not only sees God, but diffuses Him, as by some natural law of refraction, over the hearts of men. The Divine nuptials, about which the mystics tell us so much, have been accomplished in her, Nature and Grace have lain down together, and the mysteries of her religion seem but the natural expression of a perfectly balanced character, an unquenchable love and a deathless will.

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THE *Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena* was dictated to her secretaries by the Saint in ecstasy. Apart from the extraordinary circumstances of its production, this work has a special interest.

The composition of the Siennese dyer's daughter, whose will, purified and sublimated by prayer, imposed itself on popes and princes, is an almost unique specimen of what may be called "ecclesiastical" mysticism; for its special value lies in the fact that from first to last it is nothing more than a mystical exposition of the creeds taught to every child in the Catholic poor-schools. Her insight is sometimes very wonderful. How subtle, for instance, is the analysis of the state of the "worldly

man" who loves God for his own pleasure or profit! The special snares of the devout are cut through by the keen logic of one who has experienced and triumphed over them. Terrible, again, is the retribution prophesied to the "unworthy ministers of the Blood."

And so every well-known form of Christian life, healthy or parasitic, is treated of, detailed, analyzed incisively, remorselessly, and then subsumed under the general conception of God's infinite loving-kindness and mercy.

The great mystics have usually taken as their starting-point what, to most, is the goal hardly to be reached; their own treatment of the preliminary stages of spirituality is frequently conventional and *jejune*. Compare, for instance, the first book with the two succeeding ones, of Ruysbrock's *Ornement des Noces spirituelles*, that unique breviary of the Christian Platonician. Another result of their having done so is that, with certain noble exceptions, the literature of this subject has fallen into the hands of a class of writers, or rather purveyors, well-intentioned no doubt, but not endowed with the higher spiritual and mental faculties, whom it is not unfair to describe as the *feuilletonistes* of piety. Such works, brightly bound, are appropriately exposed for sale in the Roman shop-windows, among the gaudy *objets de religion* they so much resemble. To keep healthy and raise the tone of devotional literature is surely an eighth spiritual work of mercy, St. Philip Neri's advice in the matter was to prefer those writers whose names were preceded by the title of Saint. In the *Dialogo* we have a great saint, one of the most extraordinary women who ever lived, treating, in a manner so simple and familiar as at times to become almost colloquial, of the elements of practical Christianity. Passages occur frequently of lofty eloquence, and also of such literary perfection that this book is held by critics to be one of the classics of the age and land which produced Boccaccio and Petrarch. Today, in the streets of Siena, the same Tuscan idiom can be heard, hardly altered since the days of St. Catherine.

One word as to the translation. I have almost always followed the text of Gigli, a learned Siennese ecclesiastic, who edited the complete

works of St. Catherine in the last century. His is the latest edition printed of the *Dialogo*. Once or twice I have preferred the *cinquecento* Venetian editor. My aim has been to translate as literally as possible, and at the same time to preserve the characteristic rhythm of the sentences, so suggestive in its way of the sing-song articulation of the Siennese of today. St. Catherine has no style as such; she introduces a metaphor and forgets it; the sea, a vine, and a plough will often appear in the same sentence, sometimes in the same phrase. In such cases I have occasionally taken the liberty of adhering to the first simile when the confusion of metaphor in the original involves hopeless obscurity of expression.

Viareggio, September 1906



A TREATISE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

*How a soul, elevated by desire of the honor of God,
and of the salvation of her neighbors, exercising herself
in humble prayer, after she had seen the union of the soul,
through love, with God, asked of God four requests.*

THE SOUL, who is lifted by a very great and yearning desire for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, begins by exercising herself, for a certain space of time, in the ordinary virtues, remaining in the cell of self-knowledge, in order to know better the goodness of God towards her. This she does because knowledge must precede love, and only when she has attained love, can she strive to follow and to clothe herself with the truth. But, in no way, does the creature receive such a taste of the truth, or so brilliant a light therefrom, as by means of humble and continuous prayer, founded on knowledge of herself and of God; because prayer, exercising her in the above way, unites with God the soul that follows the footprints of Christ crucified, and thus, by desire and affection, and union of love, makes her another Himself. Christ would seem to have meant this, when He said: *To him who will love Me and will observe. My commandment, will I manifest Myself; and he shall be one thing with Me and I with him.* In several places we find similar words, by which we can see that it is, indeed, through the effect of love, that the soul becomes another Himself. That this may be seen more clearly, I will mention what I remember having heard from a handmaid of God, namely, that, when she was lifted up in prayer, with great elevation of mind, God was not wont to conceal, from the eye

of her intellect, the love which He had for His servants, but rather to manifest it; and, that among other things, He used to say: “Open the eye of thy intellect, and gaze into Me, and thou shalt see the beauty of My rational creature. And look at those creatures who, among the beauties which I have given to the soul, creating her in My image and similitude, are clothed with the nuptial garment (that is, the garment of love), adorned with many virtues, by which they are united with Me through love. And yet I tell thee, if thou shouldest ask Me, who these are, I should reply” (said the sweet and amorous Word of God) “they are another Myself, inasmuch as they have lost and denied their own will, and are clothed with Mine, are united to Mine, are conformed to Mine.” It is therefore true, indeed, that the soul unites herself with God by the affection of love.

So, that soul, wishing to know and follow the truth more manfully, and lifting her desires first for herself—for she considered that a soul could not be of use, whether in doctrine, example, or prayer, to her neighbor, if she did not first profit herself, that is, if she did not acquire virtue in herself—addressed four requests to the Supreme and Eternal Father. The first was for herself; the second for the reformation of the Holy Church; the third a general prayer for the whole world, and in particular for the peace of Christians who rebel, with much lewdness and persecution, against the Holy Church; in the fourth and last, she besought the Divine Providence to provide for things in general, and in particular, for a certain case with which she was concerned.

*How the desire of this soul grew when
God showed her the neediness of the world.*

THIS desire was great and continuous, but grew much more, when the First Truth showed her the neediness of the world, and in what a tempest of offense against God it lay. And she had understood this the better from a letter, which she had received from the spiritual Father of her soul, in which he explained to her the penalties and

intolerable dolor caused by offenses against God, and the loss of souls, and the persecutions of Holy Church.

All this lighted the fire of her holy desire with grief for the offenses, and with the joy of the lively hope, with which she waited for God to provide against such great evils. And, since the soul seems, in such communion, sweetly to bind herself fast within herself and with God, and knows better His truth, inasmuch as the soul is then in God, and God in the soul, as the fish is in the sea, and the sea in the fish, she desired the arrival of the morning (for the morrow was a feast of Mary) in order to hear Mass. And, when the morning came, and the hour of the Mass, she sought with anxious desire her accustomed place; and, with a great knowledge of herself, being ashamed of her own imperfection, appearing to herself to be the cause of all the evil that was happening throughout the world, conceiving a hatred and displeasure against herself, and a feeling of holy justice, with which knowledge, hatred, and justice, she purified the stains which seemed to her to cover her guilty soul, she said: "O Eternal Father, I accuse myself before Thee, in order that Thou mayest punish me for my sins in this finite life, and, inasmuch as my sins are the cause of the sufferings which my neighbor must endure, I implore Thee, in Thy kindness, to punish them in my person."

How finite works are not sufficient for punishment or recompense without the perpetual affection of love.

THEN, the Eternal Truth seized and drew more strongly to Himself her desire, doing as He did in the Old Testament, for when the sacrifice was offered to God, a fire descended and drew to Him the sacrifice that was acceptable to Him; so did the sweet Truth to that soul, in sending down the fire of the clemency of the Holy Spirit, seizing the sacrifice of desire that she made of herself, saying: "Dost thou not know, dear daughter, that all the sufferings, which the soul endures, or can endure, in this life, are insufficient to punish one smallest fault, because the offense, being done to Me, who am the Infinite Good,

calls for an infinite satisfaction? However, I wish that thou shouldest know, that not all the pains that are given to men in this life are given as punishments, but as corrections, in order to chastise a son when he offends; though it is true that both the guilt and the penalty can be expiated by the desire of the soul, that is, by true contrition, not through the finite pain endured, but through the infinite desire; because God, who is infinite, wishes for infinite love and infinite grief. Infinite grief I wish from My creature in two ways: in one way, through her sorrow for her own sins, which she has committed against Me her Creator; in the other way, through her sorrow for the sins which she sees her neighbors commit against Me. Of such as these, inasmuch as they have infinite desire, that is, are joined to Me by an affection of love, and therefore grieve when they offend Me, or see Me offended, their every pain, whether spiritual or corporeal, from wherever it may come, receives infinite merit, and satisfies for a guilt which deserved an infinite penalty, although their works are finite and done in finite time; but, inasmuch as they possess the virtue of desire, and sustain their suffering with desire, and contrition, and infinite displeasure against their guilt, their pain is held worthy. Paul explained this when he said: *If I had the tongues of angels, and if I knew the things of the future and gave my body to be burned, and have not love, it would be worth nothing to me.* The glorious Apostle thus shows that finite works are not valid, either as punishment or recompense, without the condiment of the affection of love.”

How desire and contrition of heart satisfies, both for the guilt and the penalty in oneself and in others; and how sometimes it satisfies for the guilt only, and not the penalty.

“I HAVE shown thee, dearest daughter, that the guilt is not punished in this finite time by any pain which is sustained purely as such. And I say, that the guilt is punished by the pain which is endured through the desire, love, and contrition of the heart; not by

virtue of the pain, but by virtue of the desire of the soul; inasmuch as desire and every virtue is of value, and has life in itself, through Christ crucified, My Only-begotten Son, in so far as the soul has drawn her love from Him, and virtuously follows His virtues, that is, His foot-prints. In this way, and in no other, are virtues of value, and in this way, pains satisfy for the fault, by the sweet and intimate love acquired in the knowledge of My goodness, and in the bitterness and contrition of heart acquired by knowledge of oneself and one's own thoughts. And this knowledge generates a hatred and displeasure against sin, and against the soul's own sensuality, through which, she deems herself worthy of pains and unworthy of reward."

The sweet Truth continued: "See how, by contrition of the heart, together with love, with true patience, and with true humility, deeming themselves worthy of pain and unworthy of reward, such souls endure the patient humility in which consists the above-mentioned satisfaction. Thou askest me, then, for pains, so that I may receive satisfaction for the offenses, which are done against Me by My creatures, and thou further askest the will to know and love Me, who am the Supreme Truth. Wherefore I reply that this is the way, if thou wilt arrive at a perfect knowledge and enjoyment of Me, the Eternal Truth, that thou shouldest never go outside the knowledge of thyself, and, by humbling thyself in the valley of humility, thou wilt know Me and thyself, from which knowledge thou wilt draw all that is necessary. No virtue, my daughter, can have life in itself except through charity, and humility, which is the foster-mother and nurse of charity. In self-knowledge, then, thou wilt humble thyself, seeing that, in thyself, thou dost not even exist; for thy very being, as thou wilt learn, is derived from Me, since I have loved both thee and others before you were in existence; and that, through the ineffable love which I had for you, wishing to re-create you to Grace, I have washed you, and re-created you in the Blood of My Only-begotten Son, spilt with so great a fire of love. This Blood teaches the truth to him, who, by self-knowledge, dissipates the cloud of self-love, and in no other way can he learn. Then the soul will

inflamm herself in this knowledge of Me with an ineffable love, through which love she continues in constant pain; not, however, a pain which afflicts or dries up the soul, but one which rather fattens her; for since she has known My truth, and her own faults, and the ingratitude of men, she endures intolerable suffering, grieving because she loves Me; for, if she did not love Me, she would not be obliged to do so; whence it follows immediately, that it is right for thee, and My other servants who have learnt My truth in this way, to sustain, even unto death, many tribulations and injuries and insults in word and deed, for the glory and praise of My Name; thus wilt thou endure and suffer pains. Do thou, therefore, and My other servants, carry yourselves with true patience, with grief for your sins, and with love of virtue for the glory and praise of My Name. If thou attest thus, I will satisfy for thy sins, and for those of My other servants, inasmuch as the pains which thou wilt endure will be sufficient, through the virtue of love, for satisfaction and reward, both in thee and in others. In thyself thou wilt receive the fruit of life, when the stains of thy ignorance are effaced, and I shall not remember that thou ever didst offend Me. In others I will satisfy through the love and affection which thou hast to Me, and I will give to them according to the disposition with which they will receive My gifts. In particular, to those who dispose themselves, humbly and with reverence, to receive the doctrine of My servants, will I remit both guilt and penalty, since they will thus come to true knowledge and contrition for their sins. So that, by means of prayer, and their desire of serving Me, they receive the fruit of grace, receiving it humbly in greater or lesser degree, according to the extent of their exercise of virtue and grace in general. I say then, that, through thy desires, they will receive remission for their sins. See, however, the condition, namely, that their obstinacy should not be so great in their despair as to condemn them through contempt of the Blood, which, with such sweetness, has restored them.

“What fruit do they receive?

“The fruit which I destine for them, constrained by the prayers of My servants, is that I give them light, and that I wake up in them the

hound of conscience, and make them smell the odor of virtue, and take delight in the conversation of My servants.

“Sometimes I allow the world to show them what it is, so that, feeling its diverse and various passions, they may know how little stability it has, and may come to lift their desire beyond it, and seek their native country, which is the Eternal Life. And so I draw them by these, and by many other ways, for the eye cannot see, nor the tongue relate, nor the heart think, how many are the roads and ways which I use, through love alone, to lead them back to grace, so that My truth may be fulfilled in them. I am constrained to do so by that inestimable love of Mine, by which I created them, and by the love, desire, and grief of My servants, since I am no despiser of their tears, and sweat, and humble prayers; rather I accept them, inasmuch as I am He who gives them this love for the good of souls and grief for their loss. But I do not, in general, grant to these others, for whom they pray, satisfaction for the penalty due to them, but, only for their guilt, since they are not disposed, on their side, to receive, with perfect love, My love, and that of My servants. They do not receive their grief with bitterness, and perfect contrition for the sins they have committed, but with imperfect love and contrition, wherefore they have not, as others, remission of the penalty, but only of the guilt; because such complete satisfaction requires proper dispositions on both sides, both in him that gives and him that receives. Wherefore, since they are imperfect, they receive imperfectly the perfection of the desires of those who offer them to Me, for their sakes, with suffering; and, inasmuch as I told thee that they do receive remission, this is indeed the truth, that, by that way which I have told thee, that is, by the light of conscience, and by other things, satisfaction is made for their guilt; for, beginning to learn, they vomit forth the corruption of their sins, and so receive the gift of grace.

“These are they who are in a state of ordinary charity, wherefore, if they have trouble, they receive it in the guise of correction, and do not resist overmuch the clemency of the Holy Spirit, but, coming out of their sin, they receive the life of grace. But if, like fools, they are un-

grateful, and ignore Me and the labors of My servants done for them, that which was given them, through mercy, turns to their own ruin and judgment, not through defect of mercy, nor through defect of him who implored the mercy for the ingrate, but solely through the man's own wretchedness and hardness, with which, with the hands of his free will, he has covered his heart, as it were, with a diamond, which, if it be not broken by the Blood, can in no way be broken. And yet, I say to thee, that, in spite of his hardness of heart, he can use his free will while he has time, praying for the Blood of My Son, and let him with his own hand apply It to the diamond over his heart and shiver it, and he will receive the imprint of the Blood which has been paid for him. But, if he delays until the time be past, he has no remedy, because he has not used the dowry which I gave him, giving him memory, so as to remember My benefits; intellect, so as to see and know the truth; affection, so that he should love Me, the Eternal Truth, whom he would have known through the use of his intellect. This is the dowry which I have given you all, and which ought to render fruit to Me, the Father; but, if a man barter and sells it to the devil, the devil, if he choose, has a right to seize on everything that he has acquired in this life. And, filling his memory with the delights of sin, and with the recollection of shameful pride, avarice, self-love, hatred, and unkindness to his neighbors (being also a persecutor of My servants), with these miseries, he has obscured his intellect by his disordinate will. Let such as these receive the eternal pains, with their horrible stench, inasmuch as they have not satisfied for their sins with contrition and displeasure of their guilt. Now, therefore, thou hast understood how suffering satisfies for guilt by perfect contrition, not through the finite pain; and such as have this contrition in perfection satisfy not only for the guilt, but also for the penalty which follows the guilt, as I have already said when speaking in general; and if they satisfy for the guilt alone, that is, if, having abandoned mortal sin, they receive grace, and have not sufficient contrition and love to satisfy for the penalty also, they go to the pains of Purgatory, passing through the second and last means of satisfaction.

“So thou seest that satisfaction is made, through the desire of the soul united to Me, who am the Infinite Good, in greater or lesser degree, according to the measure of love, obtained by the desire and prayer of the recipient. Wherefore, with that very same measure with which a man measures to Me, dost he receive in himself the measure of My goodness. Labor, therefore, to increase the fire of thy desire, and let not a moment pass without crying to Me with humble voice, or without continual prayers before Me for thy neighbors. I say this to thee and to the father of thy soul, whom I have given thee on earth. Bear yourselves with manful courage, and make yourselves dead to all your own sensuality.”

How very pleasing to God is the willing desire to suffer for Him.

“VERY pleasing to Me, dearest daughter, is the willing desire to bear every pain and fatigue, even unto death, for the salvation of souls, for the more the soul endures, the more she shows that she loves Me; loving Me she comes to know more of My truth, and the more she knows, the more pain and intolerable grief she feels at the offenses committed against Me. Thou didst ask Me to sustain thee, and to punish the faults of others in thee, and thou didst not remark that thou wast really asking for love, light, and knowledge of the truth, since I have already told thee that, by the increase of love, grows grief and pain, wherefore he that grows in love grows in grief. Therefore, I say to you all, that you should ask, and it will be given you, for I deny nothing to him who asks of Me in truth. Consider that the love of divine charity is so closely joined in the soul with perfect patience, that neither can leave the soul without the other. For this reason (if the soul elect to love Me) she should elect to endure pains for Me in whatever mode or circumstance I may send them to her. Patience cannot be proved in any other way than by suffering, and patience is united with love as has been said. Therefore bear yourselves with manly courage, for, unless you do so, you will not prove yourselves to be spouses of My Truth, and

faithful children, nor of the company of those who relish the taste of My honor, and the salvation of souls.”

*How every virtue and every defect is
obtained by means of our neighbor.*

“**I** WISH also that thou shouldest know that every virtue is obtained by means of thy neighbor, and likewise, every defect; he, therefore, who stands in hatred of Me, does an injury to his neighbor, and to himself, who is his own chief neighbor, and this injury is both general and particular. It is general because you are obliged to love your neighbor as yourself, and loving him, you ought to help him spiritually, with prayer, counselling him with words, and assisting him both spiritually and temporally, according to the need in which he may be, at least with your goodwill if you have nothing else. A man therefore, who does not love, does not help him, and thereby does himself an injury; for he cuts off from himself grace, and injures his neighbor, by depriving him of the benefit of the prayers and of the sweet desires that he is bound to offer for him to Me. Thus, every act of help that he performs should proceed from the charity which he has through love of Me. And every evil also, is done by means of his neighbor, for, if he does not love Me, he cannot be in charity with his neighbor; and thus, all evils derive from the soul’s deprivation of love of Me and her neighbor; whence, inasmuch as such a man does no good, it follows that he must do evil. To whom does he evil? First of all to himself, and then to his neighbor, not against Me, for no evil can touch Me, except insofar as I count done to Me that which he does to himself. To himself he does the injury of sin, which deprives him of grace, and worse than this he cannot do to his neighbor. Him he injures in not paying him the debt, which he owes him, of love, with which he ought to help him by means of prayer and holy desire offered to Me for him. This is an assistance which is owed in general to every rational creature; but its usefulness is more particular when it is done to those who are close at hand, under

your eyes, as to whom, I say, you are all obliged to help one another by word and doctrine, and the example of good works, and in every other respect in which your neighbor may be seen to be in need; counselling him exactly as you would yourselves, without any passion of self-love; and he (a man not loving God) does not do this, because he has no love towards his neighbor; and, by not doing it, he does him, as thou seest, a special injury. And he does him evil, not only by not doing him the good that he might do him, but by doing him a positive injury and a constant evil. In this way sin causes a physical and a mental injury. The mental injury is already done when the sinner has conceived pleasure in the idea of sin, and hatred of virtue, that is, pleasure from sensual self-love, which has deprived him of the affection of love which he ought to have towards Me, and his neighbor, as has been said. And, after he has conceived, he brings forth one sin after another against his neighbor, according to the diverse ways which may please his perverse sensual will. Sometimes it is seen that he brings forth cruelty, and that both in general and in particular.

“His general cruelty is to see himself and other creatures in danger of death and damnation through privation of grace, and so cruel is he that he reminds neither himself nor others of the love of virtue and hatred of vice. Being thus cruel he may wish to extend his cruelty still further, that is, not content with not giving an example of virtue, the villain also usurps the office of the demons, tempting, according to his power, his fellow-creatures to abandon virtue for vice; this is cruelty towards his neighbors, for he makes himself an instrument to destroy life and to give death. Cruelty towards the body has its origin in cupidity, which not only prevents a man from helping his neighbor, but causes him to seize the goods of others, robbing the poor creatures; sometimes this is done by the arbitrary use of power, and at other times by cheating and fraud, his neighbor being forced to redeem, to his own loss, his own goods, and often indeed his own person.

“Oh, miserable vice of cruelty, which will deprive the man who practices it of all mercy, unless he turn to kindness and benevolence

towards his neighbor!

“Sometimes the sinner brings forth insults on which often follows murder; sometimes also impurity against the person of his neighbor, by which he becomes a brute beast full of stench, and in this case he does not poison one only, but whoever approaches him, with love or in conversation, is poisoned.

“Against whom does pride bring forth evils? Against the neighbor, through love of one’s own reputation, whence comes hatred of the neighbor, reputing oneself to be greater than he; and in this way is injury done to him. And if a man be in a position of authority, he produces also injustice and cruelty and becomes a retailer of the flesh of men. Oh, dearest daughter, grieve for the offense against Me, and weep over these corpses, so that, by prayer, the bands of their death may be loosened!

“See now, that, in all places and in all kinds of people, sin is always produced against the neighbor, and through his medium; in no other way could sin ever be committed either secret or open. A secret sin is when you deprive your neighbor of that which you ought to give him; an open sin is where you perform positive acts of sin, as I have related to thee. It is, therefore, indeed the truth that every sin done against Me, is done through the medium of the neighbor.”

How virtues are accomplished by means of our neighbor, and how it is that virtues differ to such an extent in creatures.

“I HAVE told thee how all sins are accomplished by means of thy neighbor, through the principles which I exposed to thee, that is, because men are deprived of the affection of love, which gives light to every virtue, In the same way self-love, which destroys charity and affection towards the neighbor, is the principle and foundation of every evil. All scandals, hatred, cruelty, and every sort of trouble proceed from this perverse root of self-love, which has poisoned the entire world, and weakened the mystical body of the Holy Church, and the universal body of the believers in the Christian religion; and, therefore, I said to

thee, that it was in the neighbor, that is to say in the love of him, that all virtues were founded; and, truly indeed did I say to thee, that charity gives life to all the virtues, because no virtue can be obtained without charity, which is the pure love of Me.

“Wherefore, when the soul knows herself, as we have said above, she finds humility and hatred of her own sensual passion, for she learns the perverse law, which is bound up in her members, and which ever fights against the spirit. And, therefore, arising with hatred of her own sensuality, crushing it under the heel of reason, with great earnestness, she discovers in herself the bounty of My goodness, through the many benefits which she has received from Me, all of which she considers again in herself. She attributes to Me, through humility, the knowledge which she has obtained of herself, knowing that, by My grace, I have drawn her out of darkness and lifted her up into the light of true knowledge. When she has recognized My goodness, she loves it without any medium, and yet at the same time with a medium, that is to say, without the medium of herself or of any advantage accruing to herself, and with the medium of virtue, which she has conceived through love of Me, because she sees that, in no other way, can she become grateful and acceptable to Me, but by conceiving hatred of sin and love of virtue; and, when she has thus conceived by the affection of love, she immediately is delivered of fruit for her neighbor, because, in no other way, can she act out the truth she has conceived in herself, but, loving Me in truth, in the same truth she serves her neighbor.

“And it cannot be otherwise, because love of Me and of her neighbor are one and the same thing, and, so far as the soul loves Me, she loves her neighbor, because love towards him issues from Me. This is the means which I have given you, that you may exercise and prove your virtue therewith; because, inasmuch as you can do Me no profit, you should do it to your neighbor. This proves that you possess Me by grace in your soul, producing much fruit for your neighbor and making prayers to Me, seeking with sweet and amorous desire My honor and the salvation of souls. The soul, enamored of My truth, never ceases to serve the

whole world in general, and more or less in a particular case according to the disposition of the recipient and the ardent desire of the donor, as I have shown above, when I declared to thee that the endurance of suffering alone, without desire, was not sufficient to punish a fault.

“When she has discovered the advantage of this unitive love in Me, by means of which, she truly loves herself, extending her desire for the salvation of the whole world, thus coming to the aid of its neediness, she strives, inasmuch as she has done good to herself by the conception of virtue, from which she has drawn the life of grace, to fix her eye on the needs of her neighbor in particular. Wherefore, when she has discovered, through the affection of love, the state of all rational creatures in general, she helps those who are at hand, according to the various graces which I have entrusted to her to administer; one she helps with doctrine, that is, with words, giving sincere counsel without any respect of persons, another with the example of a good life, and this indeed all give to their neighbor, the edification of a holy and honorable life. These are the virtues, and many others, too many to enumerate, which are brought forth in the love of the neighbor; but, although I have given them in such a different way, that is to say not all to one, but to one, one virtue, and to another, another, it so happens that it is impossible to have one, without having them all, because all the virtues are bound together. Wherefore, learn, that, in many cases I give one virtue, to be as it were the chief of the others, that is to say, to one I will give principally love, to another justice, to another humility, to one a lively faith, to another prudence or temperance, or patience, to another fortitude. These, and many other virtues, I place, indifferently, in the souls of many creatures; it happens, therefore, that the particular one so placed in the soul becomes the principal object of its virtue; the soul disposing herself, for her chief conversation, to this rather than to other virtues, and, by the effect of this virtue, the soul draws to herself all the other virtues, which, as has been said, are all bound together in the affection of love; and so with many gifts and graces of virtue, and not only in the case of spiritual things but also of temporal. I use the word temporal for

the things necessary to the physical life of man; all these I have given indifferently, and I have not placed them all in one soul, in order that man should, perforce, have material for love of his fellow. I could easily have created men possessed of all that they should need both for body and soul, but I wish that one should have need of the other, and that they should be My ministers to administer the graces and the gifts that they have received from Me. Whether man will or no, he cannot help making an act of love. It is true, however, that that act, unless made through love of Me, profits him nothing so far as grace is concerned. See then, that I have made men My ministers, and placed them in diverse stations and various ranks, in order that they may make use of the virtue of love.

“Wherefore, I show you that in My house are many mansions, and that I wish for no other thing than love, for in the love of Me is fulfilled and completed the love of the neighbor, and the law observed. For he, only, can be of use in his state of life, who is bound to Me with this love.”

How virtues are proved and fortified by their contraries.

“UP TO the present, I have taught thee how a man may serve his neighbor, and manifest, by that service, the love which he has towards Me.

“Now I wish to tell thee further, that a man proves his patience on his neighbor, when he receives injuries from him.

“Similarly, he proves his humility on a proud man, his faith on an infidel, his true hope on one who despairs, his justice on the unjust, his kindness on the cruel, his gentleness and benignity on the irascible. Good men produce and prove all their virtues on their neighbor, just as perverse men all their vices; thus, if thou consider well, humility is proved on pride in this way. The humble man extinguishes pride, because a proud man can do no harm to a humble one; neither can the infidelity of a wicked man, who neither loves Me, nor hopes in Me, when brought forth against one who is faithful to Me, do him any harm; his infidelity does not diminish the faith or the hope of him who

has conceived his faith and hope through love of Me, it rather fortifies it, and proves it in the love he feels for his neighbor. For, he sees that the infidel is unfaithful, because he is without hope in Me, and in My servant, because he does not love Me, placing his faith and hope rather in his own sensuality, which is all that he loves. My faithful servant does not leave him because he does not faithfully love Me, or because he does not constantly seek, with hope in Me, for his salvation, inasmuch as he sees clearly the causes of his infidelity and lack of hope. The virtue of faith is proved in these and other ways. Wherefore, to those who need the proof of it, My servant proves his faith in himself and in his neighbor, and so, justice is not diminished by the wicked man's injustice, but is rather proved, that is to say, the justice of a just man. Similarly, the virtues of patience, benignity, and kindness manifest themselves in a time of wrath by the same sweet patience in My servants, and envy, vexation, and hatred demonstrate their love, and hunger and desire for the salvation of souls. I say, also, to thee, that, not only is virtue proved in those who render good for evil, but, that many times a good man gives back fiery coals of love, which dispel the hatred and rancor of heart of the angry, and so from hatred often comes benevolence, and that this is by virtue of the love and perfect patience which is in him, who sustains the anger of the wicked, bearing and supporting his defects. If thou wilt observe the virtues of fortitude and perseverance, these virtues are proved by the long endurance of the injuries and detractions of wicked men, who, whether by injuries or by flattery, constantly endeavor to turn a man aside from following the road and the doctrine of truth. Wherefore, in all these things, the virtue of fortitude conceived within the soul, perseveres with strength, and, in addition proves itself externally upon the neighbor, as I have said to thee; and, if fortitude were not able to make that good proof of itself, being tested by many contrarieties, it would not be a serious virtue founded in truth."