

CHAPTER II

Declaration of the Manner in which the Lord Manifested to My Soul these Mysteries and the Life of the Queen of Heaven in the State in which His Majesty Placed Me.

12. It seemed to me proper to preface this History with an explanatory chapter, describing and explaining, as far as is given me and as far as I can, the manner in which the Lord manifested to me these wonders.

13. Ever since I have had the use of reason I have felt one benefit of the Lord which I judge as the greatest of those which his liberal hand has vouchsafed to me, namely a great and penetrating fear lest I lose Him; and this has urged and moved me to strive after the better and more secure way, and to always work toward it and implore it from the Most High, who has pierced my flesh with this dart because I have feared his judgments (Ps. 118:120), and I live continually with this dread of whether I have lost the friendship of the Almighty or still possess it. My bread day and night has been the tears caused by this solicitude (Ps. 41:4), regarding which in these last times which hasten on (when it is necessary for the disciples of the Lord who profess virtue to practice them in secret and not to make a show of them*) I have begun to make great petitions to the Lord, and solicit the intercession of the Queen and most pure Virgin, pleading with all my heart for them to guide and lead me on a straight path and hidden from the eyes of men.

14. In answer to these repeated prayers the Lord said: "Do not fear, soul, nor afflict thyself, for I shall give thee a state and a way of light and security which only its Author could know. All that is exterior and dangerous shall leave thee from this day, and thy treasure shall be hidden. Guard it on thy part and preserve it by a perfect life. I will direct thee toward a hidden path, clear, true and pure; walk thou in it." From then on I recognized a change within me and a highly spiritualized state of mind. To my understanding was given a new light which illuminated it and infused into it a knowledge of all things in God, and of his operations as they are in themselves and as they are known and seen by God, according to the measure of his communication. It is a knowledge of light, holy, sweet and pure, subtle, penetrating, sure and agile (Wis. 7:22), causing the love of good and hatred of evil. It is a breath of the power of God (Ib. 25) and an emanation of a most subtle light, which acts as a mirror for my understanding. Thus the higher faculties and the interior perception of my soul began to expand in their activity, because the object, in the light in which He reveals it, is known to be infinite, though the eyes which see it are limited and of curtailed understanding. This vision is as it were the Lord seated on a throne of great majesty where his attributes are known with distinction, always within mortal limitation. But a covering like purest crystal intervenes, and through it these wonders and attributes or perfections of God are known and distinguished with great clarity and distinction, although through that medium or veil, which is like crystal as I have said, and which impedes the entire, immediate or intuitive vision. Yet the understanding of that which it covers is not painful but marvelous for the understanding, because it is understood the object perceived is infinite while the one who perceives is finite, and gives hope that if the soul advances toward that veil and attains the object, that which intervenes shall be removed as soon as the soul shall have been stripped of the mortality of the body (II Cor. 5:4, 6).

* cf. Mt. 6:1 [Ed.]

15. In this understanding there are modes or degrees of seeing imparted by the Lord according to the divine will showing it, because it is a voluntary mirror. Sometimes He manifests Himself more clearly, at other times less. At times some mysteries are revealed to the exclusion of others of great importance. This difference is usually in accordance with the dispositions of the soul, for if the soul is not in total quietude and peace, or has committed some fault or imperfection, no matter how small, it will not come to see this light according to the mode in which it is given, in which it can know the Lord with such clarity and certainty that it leaves no doubt about what it understands. Yet first and foremost the soul knows the being of God is present, and understands all His Majesty says. And this knowledge produces a sweet force, powerfully and efficaciously urging the soul onward to love, serve and obey the Most High. In this clarity the soul recognizes great mysteries, such as the value of virtue and how precious it is to possess it and work by it; the soul knows the perfection and security of virtue, feeling a power and force compelling it toward the good, while experiencing opposition and repugnance toward evil and the passions, often vanquishing them. As long as the soul rejoices in this light and vision, and does not lose it, it will not be conquered (Wis. 7:30), because it gives life, security, fervor and joy. Strongly and lovingly it calls and urges the soul onward, gives it lightness and alertness, and establishes the superior part of the being firmly above the inferior. Even the body becomes agile and spiritualized during such times, freeing itself from its grossness and weight.

16. As the soul perceives and feels these sweet effects it lovingly calls out to the Most High: *Trahe me post te** (Cant. 1:3), and we shall run together, for united to its Beloved it does not any more feel the doings of this earthly life. Seeking to fly after the odor of the ointments of its Beloved, it begins to live more where it loves than where it lives. Having already left behind its lower nature, it turns back only for the purpose of reforming it and curtailing its animal appetites of the passions. If at any time they seek to rise in rebellion, the soul will subdue them with alacrity, for already *not I live, but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. 2:20).

17. In all these holy operations and aspirations, to a certain extent, is felt the assistance of the spirit of Christ, who is God and the life of the soul (I Jn. 5:11-12), and who is known in the fervor, the desire, the light, and the efficacy in working with an interior force which only God can produce. One feels the continuation and virtue of this light and the love which it causes, and the intimate conversation with God, living and continuous, which rivets the attention of the mind to the things of God and withdraws it from earthly things. Christ manifests Himself as living within the soul, exerting his power and dispersing the darkness by his light. This may be properly designated as standing at the entrance of the house of the Lord, for there the soul beholds the splendor emanating from the beacon light of the Lamb of God (Apoc. 21:23).

18. I do not say this is the whole light, but a part of it, and it consists in a knowledge superior to the capabilities and faculties of a creature. For this vision the Most High animates the intellect by a certain subtlety and light, thus adapting it for the exalted knowledge; moreover, the knowledge thus given is accompanied by the certainty which is peculiar to faith, as experienced in regard to the more common truths of revelation. Faith accompanies the vision, and the Omnipotent gives to the soul the power to appreciate the value of the knowledge and light which He infuses. His light is inextinguishable, and all good things and a nobility of great price come to me with it (Wis. 7:10-11). This light goes before me directing my ways, and I took possession of it unerringly, and I desired to communicate it without envy, nor have I concealed its excellence (Ib. 12-13). It is a participation of the Divinity, and its presence is a great delight and joy (Wis.

* *Draw me after thee* [Ed]

8:16, 18). It teaches great things freely and disciplines the heart; with irresistible force it banishes and expels the deceitful things of this world wherein, solely by looking upon them in this light, the spirit finds immeasurable bitterness. By it the soul leaves behind the perishable things and flies to the sacred refuge of eternal truth. It enters into the cellar of fermented wine (Cant. 2:4) where the Most High orders in me most holy charity. By it He urges me to be patient and without envy (I Cor. 13:4), to be kind without offense, to be free from pride, ambition and anger, thinking ill of nobody but suffering and tolerating all things. Its voice is ever within me (Prov. 8:1), secretly and powerfully warning me to do what is most holy and most pure, teaching me in all things; and if I fall short in the slightest degree, it reprehends me without ever passing over the smallest point.

19. This is the light which at one and at the same time enlightens, raises to fervor, teaches and reprehends, chastens and enlivens, calls and deters, warns and compels, makes clear the distinction between good and evil, discloses the hidden and the profound, the length and the breadth (Eph. 3:18); which reveals to me the world, its state, its inclinations, its deceits, and the lies and fallacies of its lovers and clients. Above all it teaches me to despise the world, to tread it under foot, and to raise myself to the highest Lord and Governor of the universe. And in His Majesty I see and learn the ordering of all things (Wis. 7:17-20), the power of the elements, the beginning, the middle, and the end of time, its changes and variations, the course of the years, the harmony of all creatures and their qualities; all that is hidden concerning men, their operations and thoughts, and how distant they are from those of the Lord;* the dangers in which they live and the sinister ways by which they proceed; the states and governments, their momentary firmness and small stability; their entire beginning and end, and the true and false principles they have. All this is seen and known distinctly in God through this light, knowing even individual persons and conditions. But descending to another more inferior and ordinary state, wherein it makes use of the substance and habit of this enlightenment, though not all of its clarity, there is a certain limitation of that so exalted knowledge of persons, conditions, and secret thoughts just described. In this lower state I perceive only so much as is necessary to avoid danger and flee from sin, and to compassionate other persons with true tenderness, though at the same time I am not permitted to speak clearly with anyone about that which is revealed to me of their evil state. I could not do it if I tried, for it seems as if I am made mute, except at times when the Author of this light gives me permission and commands me to admonish one of my neighbors. But even on such occasions I must not disclose the nature of my cognition, but I am constrained to speak to the heart, using plain arguments and simple, ordinary and charitable persuasion in God. At the same time I am urged to pray for their necessities which for that object become known to me.

20. Although all these things were revealed to me with the greatest clearness, yet never has the Lord shown me the final ruin of any soul which has damned itself. This knowledge is withheld from me by the providence of God, since He is so just that He does not deem it appropriate to reveal the damnation of a soul except for some great purpose; and if I were to come to the knowledge of such a great ruin I think I would die of sorrow. This would doubtlessly be the effect of such a revelation, so great is the grief caused by the sight of a soul forever separated from God. I have besought Him not to show me anyone who will damn himself, and if I could liberate anyone who is in sin by my own life I would not refuse this labor or whatever the Lord would show me is required; but may I never see one who cannot be helped.

* cf. Is. 55:8-9 [Ed.]

21. This light is not given me to reveal my secrets in particular, but so I can make use of it with prudence and wisdom. This light remains with me as a substance which vivifies (though this is coincidental), which emanates from God, and as a habit to be used for Him, ordering well the senses and the inferior part of the soul. Moreover, in the superior part of my soul I enjoy a vision and habitation of peace, and I understand the mysteries and sacraments of the life of the Queen of heaven and of other mysteries of faith which I have almost incessantly present to me, or at least the light is never lost from my view. And if at any time I descend, as a creature is accustomed to do, to attend to human affairs, the Lord presently calls me with a sweet yet rigorous severity and again draws my attention to his words and teachings, and to the conscious meditation of these sacraments, graces and virtues, and to the exterior and interior works of the Virgin Mother, as I will explain farther on.

22. In this manner, and in the states and light of which I have spoken, I also see and recognize the Queen herself, our Lady, when She speaks with me, along with the holy Angels, their nature and excellence. Sometimes I see and recognize them in the Lord, while at other times I see them in themselves, but with this difference, that in seeing them in themselves I descend to a lower grade of knowledge; I also understand this difference, which results from the difference between the object itself and the manner in which the intellect is moved. In this lower degree of vision I see, speak and listen to the holy Princes; they converse with me and explain many of the mysteries which the Lord has shown me. The Queen of heaven likewise manifests and propounds to me the mysteries of her most holy life and of its admirable events. With distinction I recognize each one of these persons in themselves, feeling the divine effects which each one respectively works in the soul.

23. But in the Lord I see these same persons as in a voluntary mirror, His Majesty showing me the saints whom He desires to show, in the manner pleasing to Him, with a great and singular clarity and more exalted effects for my soul, because the Lord himself is known by this admirable light, and also the saints and their excellent virtues and wonderful works, and likewise the manner in which they exercised these virtues by the help of the graces which made them capable of all this (Philip. 4:13). In this state of knowledge the creature is more abundantly and completely filled with a joy which still further increases the power and satisfaction of the soul, and poises it as if on its center of gravity; for the more intellectual and the less corporeal or imaginary the light, so much the more powerful and exalted are the effects, and so much the more substantial and certain is the knowledge attained. Yet also here there is a difference, for the vision or knowledge of God himself, of his attributes and his perfections, is superior, and its effects are most sweet and affable, while the vision and knowledge of the creatures, even in the Lord, is of an inferior order. This inferiority, it seems to me, arises in part from the soul itself, since its own vision is so limited that it cannot attend to or perceive God as well when seeing Him conjointly with creatures as when seeing Him by Himself and without them; also, this vision of God by Himself is accompanied by a greater plenitude of joy than the vision of creatures in God. So delicate is this cognition of the Divinity that to attend to any other thing in conjunction with it impairs to a certain extent its clearness, at least as long as we shall be in our mortal state.

24. In the inferior state which I have mentioned I see the most holy Virgin and the Angels in themselves and their mode of teaching me, speaking to me, and enlightening me. I understand this to be similar to the mode in which the Angels themselves enlighten, communicate and speak with each other when the superior orders enlighten the inferior. The Lord is the first cause of this light, but the Queen, who has received it in its highest plenitude, communicates it as through a

channel to the superior part of my soul so I begin to know her excellence, prerogatives and mysteries in the same manner as an inferior Angel perceives that which is communicated to him by the superior spirits. I recognize Her also by the doctrine which She teaches, by the efficacy it possesses, and by other qualities which are felt and tasted regarding the purity, elevation and truth of the vision. There nothing impure, obscure, false or suspicious is encountered, and nothing that is holy, pure and true is withheld from view. The same happens to me in its proper proportion when conversing with the holy Angels, for the Lord himself has often informed me that they enlighten and communicate with me in the same manner as they converse with each other. Often it happens that the enlightenments pass through all these channels and conduits in succession: The Lord gives the intelligence or light, the most holy Virgin reveals it to me, and the Angels express it to me in words. At other times (and this is the most ordinary mode) the Lord communicates and teaches me his holy doctrine, sometimes the most holy Queen, and sometimes the holy Angels; and usually I am given only the understanding, and I must find the terms for declaring what I hold in the intelligence. In finding these terms I may err, if the Lord permits, for I am an ignorant woman and must avail myself of what I have heard; and when I have any difficulty in declaring these enlightenments, I turn to my master and spiritual father, especially in the more difficult and arduous matters.

25. In this condition and state I very seldom see corporeal visions, but imaginary visions I sometimes see. These are of a much lower grade than the exalted and more spiritual or intellectual vision* of which I have until now spoken. But this I can assert with confidence: In all the spiritual enlightenments which I receive, great or small, lower or higher, whether they come from the Lord, the most blessed Virgin, or the holy Angels, in all of them I obtain most abundant light and help for salvation, enabling me to see and know the truth and the possibility of greater perfection and sanctity. I feel within me a divine force which compels me to seek the greater purity of my soul and advancement in the grace of the Lord, and to die for it, and to work in all things that which is greater. And with the aforementioned grades and modes of the intelligences I receive I know all these mysteries of the life of the Queen of heaven with great progress and rejoicing of my spirit. For this with all my heart and mind I magnify the Almighty, I thank Him, adore Him, and confess Him as the holy and omnipotent God, strong and admirable, worthy of honor, magnificence, glory and reverence through all the ages. Amen.

* For an explanation of intellectual, imaginary and corporeal visions, see par. 631ff. [Ed.]