

THE SHRINE *of* WISDOM

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PLOTINUS

ON FELICITY*

(TRANSLATION BY THOMAS TAYLOR)

If, then, man can possess a perfect life, certainly man from its possession must be happy, otherwise we must attribute felicity to the Gods alone, if They only possess a life of this kind. But, because we confess that felicity may likewise abide in men, let us consider after what manner this subsists; that man possesses a perfect life, not indeed if alone possessing one that is sensual, but from his participation of reason and true intellect, is already sufficiently evident; but it may be inquired whether he enjoys this perfect life as something different from himself. Certainly he is not a happy man unless he possesses this felicity either in capacity or in energy. But shall we say it abides in him as a part, and call it a perfect species of life? Or shall we not say that a man of a different description from the happy man, possesses this as a part, by possessing it in a certain capacity, but that he is happy who exists in energy in a perfect life, and is arrived to that degree of excellence as to become with it perfectly the same? External circumstances surround such a one, which he does not assert to be parts of himself, because he is unwilling they should surround him; but if he wished to be connected with them, they would, in this case, belong to him. To such a one as this, then, it may be asked, what is good? Perhaps he is good to himself from that which he possesses; but that which is of a superior nature is the cause of that which flourishes in himself, and which is

* For previous section see *Shrine of Wisdom*, No. 79.

participated as good by others in a manner different from that good which is considered in itself.

But an evidence from hence may be derived, that he who is so affected desires nothing further; for what should he inquire after? Nothing, surely, of a subordinate nature; since he is conjoined with that which is best.

He, therefore, who lives in this manner possesses a sufficient life; and if he is endued with virtue he will be sufficient to the enjoyment of felicity and the possession of good; for there is no good which he does not possess; but that which he inquires after he seeks as necessary, not indeed for himself, but as requisite to something belonging to him, external and adventitious—that is, to body, with which he is connected, and not as peculiar, or belonging to the interior man. Indeed, this he well knows, and cares for his body in such a manner as may best promote his enjoyment of an intellectual life. Hence he is not the less happy in adverse fortune, for, as well as a life of this kind, he abides in the same state of felicity. Besides, in the death of his domestics and friends, he is not ignorant of the nature of death: and the deceased themselves, if worthy while living, were well acquainted with the nature of death. But if any molestation be produced by the dissolution of his familiars and necessary friends, it does not affect the true inward man, but that part alone in the worthy man which is destitute of intellect, the peculiar molestations of which the happy soul does not receive.

But against this definition of felicity it may be objected, can the soul be happy while its energies are prevented by pains of the body and disease? Besides, what is to be said if the worthy man should be delirious or mad? For this is sometimes effected by enchantments or desire. How can a man in such circumstances live well and be happy? Not to mention the miseries resulting from want and an abject fortune; and, perhaps, some one considering these, may adduce against us the calamities of Priam, and affirm that however he may bear these misfortunes with ease, yet his *will* can never concur with their endurance.

But, it will be said, a happy life ought to be agreeable to our desire, since the worthy man is not soul alone, but the nature of body must be enumerated with his essence, as far

as the passions of the body are transferred to his soul; and, again, that for the sake of the body particular things are pursued or avoided by the worthy man. Hence, since pleasure is necessary to a happy life, how can a man be happy when surrounded with difficulties and pains? even if he is a good man whom adversity of this kind oppresses? Indeed, to the Gods alone a disposition of this kind, blessed and self-sufficient, belongs: but to men, with whose souls something inferior is connected, felicity is to be inquired after about the whole composite, and not about one part alone, although the most excellent; which, as often as the subordinate part is ill-conditioned, is necessarily prevented from the proper energies of its nature; or, if this be not admitted, it is necessary to cast aside body and corporeal sense, and thus self-sufficient to inquire after felicity.

But if reason places felicity in being free from sickness and danger, and in never falling into great adversities, no one can be happy while things of such a contrary nature are dependent. But if felicity consists in the possession of true good, why is it requisite, neglecting this, to inquire after other things which ought not to be associated with felicity? For if felicity were the accumulation of things good, and at the same time necessary, or of goods greater and less, which are not only necessary but are called *goods*, it is requisite that these likewise should be present.

But if it is proper that there should be some one end, and not many ends (or else a man would not inquire after the end, but after ends), it is necessary to pursue that alone which is the last and most excellent, and which the soul seeks after as something which may reside in the depths of its essence. But inquiry and will do not tend to the non-possession of this most excellent end; for discursive reason does not choose a declination of things inconvenient from a principal desire of nature, but alone flies from and repels such as are present, or desires to conjoin things convenient. But the principal appetite of the soul is directed to that which is best, with which, when present, it is filled, and enjoys perfect repose: and this is the life which the prime desire of the soul pursues. But that something of necessaries should be present is not the wish of the soul, if we consider the soul's desire properly, and not according to

the abuse of words; since we alone think the presence of these requisite, because, to the utmost of our ability, we decline from every thing evil. Nor yet is this employment of declination to be principally desired, for it is far more desirable never to want such a declination from evil.

The truth of this is sufficiently evident from necessities when present, such as health, and a privation of pain; for which of these in a wonderful manner attracts the soul to itself? Since it is customary to neglect present ease and health, and to be unconscious of their possession. But such things as when present possess no gentle attractive power of converting the soul to themselves, cannot add anything to our felicity. And it is consonant to reason to believe that things whose absence is caused by the presence of their offending contraries, are necessary, rather than good; they are not, therefore, to be enumerated with the end, but while they are absent, and their contraries depend, the end of life is to be preserved perfect and entire.

But, it may be said, on what account does the happy man desire these to be present, and reject their contraries? Perhaps we may reply, not because they confer anything to felicity, but rather are, in some respects, necessary to existence itself, in the present state; but that their contraries either lead to non-existence, or disturb, by their presence, a man enjoying the end, at the same time not destroying that end; and because he who enjoys that which is best, desires to possess it alone, and not in conjunction with anything else. But though anything else should occur, it would not take away the end, which is not absent while this is present. And, indeed, though something should happen to the happy man against his desire, he will not, on this account, lose any part of his felicity. For, if this be admitted, he must be daily changed, and fall off from felicity; as when he loses a son, or suffers any loss in his domestic concerns; since there are innumerable accidents which take place contrary to the will, and which detract nothing from the true and invariable end of life.

But it may be said that great adversities only lessen felicity; but what is there among human concerns so great, which will not be despised by him who betakes himself to things far more excellent and sublime, and is no longer dependent on such as

are subordinate? For since the worthy man would not esteem the greatest prosperity of any moment or worth, such as the sovereign command of nations, or the establishing of cities, why should he think the loss of dominion, or destruction of his country, a grievous misfortune? But if he thinks anything of this kind to be a great evil, or evil at all, he is to be reckoned ridiculous, and is no longer a truly worthy man while he accounts timber and stones, and by Jupiter, the death of mortals, as a matter of great concern, when he ought to esteem death far better than corporeal life. But what if he should be sacrificed, would he think death an evil to himself because he is to be slain near the altars? Will he likewise account it a great matter that he is to be buried ignobly and at a small cost, and is judged unworthy of a more lofty monument? But it is entirely pusillanimous to reckon such things worthy of concern: besides, if he should be led captive, he may possess a power of freeing himself, if he cannot in such a condition be happy. But if his domestic grand-children are led captive, will he be less happy? What then shall we say should he depart from life without having beheld relatives of this kind; would he migrate from such a life with an opinion that such a connection could not have subsisted? But to think in this manner would be absurd. But may he not think it possible for his kindred to be oppressed by such casualties? Will he be less happy in futurity in consequence of the possibility of this opinion being realized? Rather, indeed, though he think so, he will be happy.

Hence, though such circumstances should take place at present, he will consider that the nature of the universe is such, that he should bear things of this kind, and that it is requisite he should follow the general order. Besides, many who are led captive, act better than before; and it is in the arbitration of those who are bound, to make themselves free. But if they abide in captivity, they either continue for some particular reason—and in this case there is nothing truly grievous in their condition—or they abide without reason, and in this case it is not proper to be the cause of their own perturbation.

Indeed, the worthy man is never oppressed with evil through ignorance of his own concerns, nor changed by the fortunes

of others, whether prosperous or adverse. But when his pains are vehement, as far as it is possible to bear he bears them, and when they are excessive they may cause him to be delirious: yet he will not be miserable in the midst of the greatest pains, but his intellectual splendour will assiduously shine in the penetralia of his soul, like a bright light secured in a watch-tower, which shines with unremitting splendour though surrounded by stormy winds and raging seas. But what shall we say if, through the violence of pain, he is no longer sensible, or is just ready to destroy himself? Indeed, if the pain is so vehemently extended, he will, if sensible, consult what is requisite to be done, for in these concerns the freedom of the will is not taken away.

But it is requisite to know that circumstances of this kind do not appear to men excellent in virtue so dreadful as to others, nor yet reach to the inward man; neither torments, nor griefs, belonging to himself, nor the particular difficulties with which others are oppressed, or this would be a certain debility of our soul; which is then sufficiently evident, when we think it requisite that such misfortunes should be concealed from us, such as death, when imminent, or distant inconveniences, surveying ourselves, and not the seeming evils, lest we should be affected with any molestations. But all this is the fault of our imbecility, which we ought vigorously to repulse, nor (yielding to such weakness) fear lest anything of molestation should happen.

But if anyone objects that we are so constituted by nature that we ought to grieve for domestic misfortunes, he should understand that, in the first place, all men are not so affected, and, in the next place, that it is the business of virtue to reduce the common condition of nature to that which is better, and to something more honest than the decisions of the vulgar. But it is more honest to consider as things of no moment, all that appear grievous to our common nature; for the worthy man ought not to be as one rude and unskilful, but, like a strenuous wrestler, should vigorously repel the strokes of fortune endeavouring to throw his fortitude on the ground; since he knows that such things are displeasing to a common nature, but that to such a nature as his own they are not really grievous, but are terrible only, as it were, to boys.

Will he then, you will say, wish for things apparently afflictive? Perhaps he may be unwilling to be connected with them; but, when they happen, he opposes virtue to their attacks, by means of which the soul is not easily changed and affected.

But what shall we say when the worthy man is no longer himself, being overwhelmed either with disease or magic? We reply that, if in such a state they allow he may retain his proper virtue, like one in a deep sleep, what is there to prevent his being happy? Since they do not deprive him of felicity in sleep, nor esteem that interval of rest as any hindrance to the happiness of the whole of life: but if they deny such a one to be worthy, the same consequences will not ensue.

But we, supposing a man to be worthy, inquire whether, so far as worthy, he is always happy. Again, if it be said how can he be happy, although endowed with virtue, while he does not perceive himself virtuous, nor energizes according to virtue? We reply, although a man does not perceive himself to be healthy, he may nevertheless be healthy; and, again, he will not be less beautiful in his body although not sensible of his beauty; and will a man be less wise if he does not perceive himself to be wise? But, perhaps, some one may say, that wisdom should be accompanied with sense and animadversion, for felicity is present with wisdom in energy. We reply, if this energy of wisdom were anything adventitious, there might be some weight in the assertion; but if the subsistence of wisdom is situated in a certain essence, or rather in essence itself, this essence will neither perish in him who is asleep or delirious, or is denied to be any longer conscious of his felicity, and, indeed, the energy of this essence resides in the soul of such a one, and is an energy perpetually vigilant; for then the worthy man, considered as worthy, energizes, whether in a dormant state, or overwhelmed with infirmity. But an energy of this kind is not concealed from the whole itself but rather from some particular part; just as with respect to the vegetable energy in its most flourishing state, an animadversion of such an energy does not transmigrate into the external man by means of a sentient nature; and if we were entirely the same with our vegetable power, there is no doubt but we should energize whenever such a virtue was in energy: but since the case is

otherwise, and we are the energy of that which is intelligent, we energize in consequence of its energy. But perhaps such an energy is concealed from us because it does not reach any sentient power; for to this purpose it should energize through sense as a medium: but why should not intellect energize, and soul about intellect, preceding all sense and animadversion? For it is requisite there should be some energy prior to animadversion, since the energy of intellect is the same with its essence. But animadversion appears to take place when the energy of intellect is reflected; and when that which energizes according to the life of the soul rebounds, as it were, back again, like images in a mirror, quietly situated in a smooth and polished place, so as to reflect every form which its receptacle contains. For as, in things of this kind, when the mirror is not present or is not properly disposed, the energy from which the image was formed is indeed present, but the resemblance absent; so with respect to the soul, when it energizes in quiet, certain resemblances of thought and intellect beam on our imagination, like the images in the smooth and polished mirror; and in a sensible manner, as it were, we acknowledge that our intellect and thought energize together with the former knowledge. But when this medium is confounded, because the harmony of the body is disturbed, then thought and intellect understand without an image, and intellection is carried on without imagination.

Hence intelligence may be considered as subsisting together with the phantasy, while, in the meantime, intelligence is something very different from the phantasy. Besides, it is easy to discover many speculations of men when vigilant and honest; actions, in the performance of which it is evident that we do not perceive ourselves to speculate and act; for it is not necessary that he who reads should be conscious he is reading, especially when he reads with the greatest attention; nor that he who acts vigorously should necessarily acknowledge his vigorous energy; and the same consequence ensues in a variety of other operations; so that animadversions appear to render more debile the actions which they attend; but when they are *alone*, they are then pure, and seem to possess more of energy and life. And hence when worthy men live in such a state it follows that they live in a more perfect manner; since their

life is not at that time diffused into sense, and by this means remitted in its energy, but is collected into itself in one uniform, intellectual tenor.

But if it be objected that a man of this kind cannot be said to live, we, on the contrary, affirm that he truly lives, but that his felicity is concealed from him, as well as his life; and, if this is not consented to, we think it just that, allowing him to live and to be a worthy man, they inquire only whether, in such a state, he is happy, lest by detracting from him life, they should ask whether he lives well. It is likewise proper that they should not, by entirely taking away the nature of man, deliberate concerning his felicity; and, lastly, that they do not seek after the worthy man in external actions, after having granted that he is entirely conversant with that which lies deep in the soul. Nor ought they to think that his will is placed in external concerns; for felicity can have no subsistence if the worthy man is said to affect externals, and to place his desires in their possession.

All men, indeed, desire to live well, and free from the incursion of things evil; but if the worthy man does not find these succeed according to his wish, he will nevertheless be happy. But if any one should say that he is deceived, and wanders from reason, by only wishing for such things (since it is impossible for evil not to exist), he ought to assent to the propriety of our conduct in converting the will of such a one to that which is intimately his own.

But if pleasures are required in the life of such a man, they cannot be the pleasures of the intemperate, nor such as are corporeal; for it is impossible that these should be present without contaminating felicity. Nor, again, is the more abundant motion of gladness and mirth required; for why should things of this kind be requisite to true felicity? But those pleasures alone are necessary which accompany the presence of good, and which are neither placed in motion nor recently possessed. For things truly good are already present, and the worthy man is present to himself, and his pleasure and serenity ever abides; for he is always serene, his state is ever quiet, and his affection sufficient, and he is never disturbed, if truly worthy, by any of those circumstances of being which are denominated evil. But he who seeks after any other species

of pleasure in the life of a worthy man, ceases any longer to inquire after a worthy life.

Nor are the good man's energies entirely prevented by the changes of fortune, but different energies will take place in different fortunes, yet all of them equally honest, and those perhaps more honest which rightly compose jarring externals. But the energies of his contemplation, if they respect things particular, will perhaps be such as he ought to produce from inquiry and consideration; but the greatest discipline always resides with him, and is perpetually at hand, and this the more so, though he should be placed in the Bull of Phalaris, which is ridiculously called pleasant, when twice or frequently pronounced; for what is there pronounced in agony, is pronounced by that which is placed in torment, the external and shadowy man, which is far different from the true man, who, dwelling by himself, so far as he necessarily resides with himself, never ceases from the contemplation of universal good.

But that the good man in particular is not a certain composite from soul and body, is evinced by a separation from body, and a contempt of all that is called corporeal good.

But it would be ridiculous to assert that felicity pertains to our common life, since felicity is a good life resident in the soul, and is an energy not of the whole soul nor of the animal or vegetable part, so as in any manner to border on corporeal sensations.

For felicity is not placed in the magnitude, beauty, or proper habit of the body; nor, again, in the vigour and perfection of the senses; since too much prosperity of body and the senses oppresses the soul with a dead weight, and draws her aside from herself. But it is proper, by a retrograde process, and by a departure from sense, converting the soul to that which is best, so to attenuate the body that the true man may appear to be perfectly different from externals.

But supposing a man to be beautiful, great, and rich, and to possess universal empire; such a one, deceived by such trifling concerns, is not to be envied. Circumstances indeed of this kind were perhaps never united in the person of one wise man; and if they were present, while he properly cultivates himself, he will break them in pieces and diminish their power; by negligence of his body, wearing away its luxuries, and resigning his sovereign command. Besides, he will so care for

the health of his body, that he will desire not to be entirely unskilled in the cure of disease and pain; so that in his youth he will desire to learn arts of this kind, but in old age he will neither wish to be disturbed with such cares, nor with any corporeal pleasures or corporeal concern, whether pleasant or painful, lest he should be compelled to decline to the dark regions of body. But, when situated in a painful condition, he opposes, as his guard, virtue, ever present with him, and ever sufficient; and so prepares himself for every circumstance of life, that neither in pleasures, prosperous health, and vacation from labour, he may esteem himself more happy, nor less blessed, when their opposites succeed: for since the former cannot increase felicity, certainly it can never be diminished by the latter, their perfect contraries.

But, it may be said, if there are two wise men, the one possessing all that is judged consonant, and the other all that is reckoned contrary, to nature, can both be equally happy? Certainly both, if they are equally wise, for if the one should be beautiful in his body, and possess everything besides, which is neither subservient to the acquisition of virtue and wisdom, nor to the contemplation of that which is highest and best, nor to the enjoyment of the most excellent life, of what consequence is their acquisition? Since their possessor will be far from glorying, as if he were more happy than the wise man who is deprived of their possession: besides, an abundance of such things does not even confer to the end of the piper's art.

But we, considering the happy man according to the infirmity of our nature, judge such things to be grievous and horrible which the happy man considers as of the smallest importance; for otherwise he will not yet be wise and blessed, unless he first banishes from himself all fallacies of imagination of this kind, and is able to confide in himself, as one who is no longer capable of enduring evil: for after this manner he will live intrepid in every state, but if he fears anything he is not yet perfect in virtue, but is virtuous only by halves.

And with respect to fear arising from some unexpected circumstances of *being*, while the worthy man is intent upon other things, he will immediately endeavour to repel its attacks, and calm—either by threats or the assistance of reason—that conjoined sense which is moved, as it were, with childish grief,

by threatening, I say, without suffering perturbation; just like a boy who is restrained from doing wrong by the awe excited from the presence of another greater than himself.

Nor will such a man, on this account, be void of friendship and gratitude; for he is both friendly and grateful to himself and to those with whom he is connected. And since he gives to his friends what he attributes to himself, he will be a peculiar friend, and will at the same time live in the enjoyment of intellect.

But he who does not place the worthy man in such an exalted intellect, but subjects him to the power of fortune and to the fear of evil, certainly adduces a different character from that which we think belongs to the worthy man, and presents us with a mixed character and life, composed from good and evil: such indeed as is not easy to be found, and when found is not deserving of the name of felicity; possessing nothing great, either pertaining to the excellency of wisdom or the purity of goodness.

Felicity, therefore, cannot consist in a common life; and Plato rightly judges that the chief good is to be sought from above and must be beheld by him who is wise and wishes to become happy in futurity; and that he must study to approach to its similitude, and to live its exalted life. It is requisite therefore to possess this alone, in order to obtain the end of life, and the wise man will esteem all besides as certain mutations of place, which, in reality, confer nothing to felicity. In every circumstance of being he will conjecture what is right, and act as necessity requires, as far as his abilities extend; and though living a life superior to sense, he will not be hindered from taking a proper care of the body with which he is connected, always acting in a similar manner to the musician, who cares for his lyre as long as he is able to use it, but when it becomes useless and ceases any longer to perform the office of a lyre, he either changes it for another, or abstains entirely from its exercise, having an employment independent of the lyre, and disregarding it lying near him, as no longer harmonious, he sings without its instrumental assistance. Yet this instrument was not bestowed on the musician from the first in vain, because it has often been used by him with advantage and delight.

THE TEACHINGS OF ST. TERESA OF JESUS*

The next stage—that of the prayer of union or contemplation—has various degrees which may lead almost imperceptibly one into the other. The first of these is “a death to the things of this world and a fruition of God” in which the powers of the soul “are not wholly lost, nor understanding how they are at work.” The garden is watered here from a river or brook, where the only work is in directing the water. . . . “In this state our Lord will help the gardener and in such a way as to be as it were the gardener Himself, doing all the work . . . it is a glorious folly, a heavenly madness wherein true wisdom is acquired and to the soul a kind of fruition full of delight . . . the faculties of the soul now retain only the power of occupying themselves wholly with God; not one of them ventures to stir. . . . The soul longs to send forth songs of praise, but it has no control over itself—it is in a state of sweet restlessness. The flowers are already opening; they are beginning to send forth their fragrance. . . . The soul in this state would have all to be partakers of its joy.”

The soul may long to be rid of the body that it may dwell more completely with God, yet in this state it can be both with God and engaged in other service. “This state of prayer seems to be a most distinct union of the whole soul with God, but for this, that His Majesty appears to give the soul leave to be intent upon and have the fruition of the great work He is doing. It happens at times, and indeed very often that, the will being in union, the soul should be aware of it and see that the will alone is abiding in great peace while, on the other hand, the understanding and memory are so free that they can be employed in affairs and be occupied in works of charity.” The soul here is compared with both Mary and Martha for it lives at once the active and the contemplative life.

The second degree of union is symbolized by rain falling on the garden so that no work of watering is done by the gardener. In the former state the soul was conscious that it

* For previous section see *Shrine of Wisdom*, No. 79.

was in the world—not entirely dead to it—inasmuch as it longed to manifest its feelings to the world. But in this higher state “there is no sense of anything, only fruition, without understanding what that is the fruition of which is granted. It is understood that the fruition is of a certain good containing in itself all good together at once; but this good is not comprehended. . . . The senses are not able to attend to anything else either outward or inward except this fruition. . . . The joy felt is incomparably greater and the power of showing it still less. . . . If it be really a union of all the faculties the soul, even if it wished, when it is in union, it cannot make it known, and if it can, it is not union at all.”

In *The Way of Perfection* this prayer is briefly referred to in connection with the petition “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” “Unless we resign and conform our will utterly to the Divine Will we shall never obtain that (living) water. . . . Here we can do nothing on our part. Here we neither work nor plan for ourselves, nor is it necessary, for everything except the prayer ‘Thy Will be done’ would only hinder and disturb us. . . . What power, sisters, lies in this gift of the will! The more resolute we are and the more our actions testify that ours are no empty vows, the closer does God draw us to Him. He raises us far above all earthly things, and even above ourselves that He may prepare us to receive heavenly favours.”

In *The Interior Castle* the fifth mansions correspond to the prayer of union. “Rouse yourselves, my sisters, and since some foretaste of heaven may be had here on earth, beg our Lord to give us grace not to miss it through our own fault. . . . God would have you keep back nothing from Him, little or great, He will have it all. . . . There is no more certain sign whether or not we have reached the prayer of union.”

In the prayer of quiet the soul seems to be neither fully awake nor asleep as regard its awareness of the world and itself. But in the prayer of union the soul “has died entirely to this world to live more truly than ever in God . . . it seems to have left its mortal covering to abide more entirely in God.

“God deprives the soul of all its senses that He may the better imprint in it true wisdom.” This prayer leaves in the soul a deep and unshakable certitude of the truth presented to it. “I knew of someone who was unaware of God’s being

in all things by presence, power, and essence, yet was firmly convinced of it by a favour of this kind."

The next state of contemplation considered by St. Teresa is an intensification, as it were, of the prayer of union already referred to. She gives it the general name "elevation of the spirit in union," which takes various forms such as trance, rapture and ecstasy of which there are many kinds and degrees. In the *Life* she tells of the soul which "while thus seeking after God, is conscious, with a joy excessive and sweet, that it is, as it were, utterly fainting away in a kind of trance: breathing and all the bodily strength fail it . . . if the eyes are open, they are as if they saw nothing; nor is reading possible. . . . The ear hears, but what is heard is not comprehended. All bodily strength vanishes and that of the soul increases to enable it the better to have fruition of its joy. . . . I think it cannot be very long before some one of the faculties recovers itself. It is the will that persists in the work . . . as the will is calm it entrances them again. . . . But this state of complete absorption lasts only for a short time; though the faculties for some time afterwards do not so completely recover themselves as not to be as if in disorder: God, from time to time, drawing them to Himself." In trance "the understanding, if it understands, does not know how it understands. . . . The soul is represented as being close to God and there abides a conviction thereof so certain and strong that it cannot possibly help believing so. . . . Our Lord said to me: 'it undoes itself utterly, my daughter, in order that it may give itself more and more to Me. It is not itself that then lives, it is I.'" . . . "The soul remains possessed of so much courage that if it were now hewn in pieces for God it would be a great consolation to it. This is the time of heroic determination, of the living energy of good desires." The soul makes greater and higher progress than it ever made before in the previous states of prayer.

In *The Interior Castle* a warning is given against delusion with regard to states of so-called trance. "On account of their penances, prayers and vigils, or even because of debility of health, some persons cannot receive spiritual consolation without being overcome by it. On feeling any interior joy, their bodies being languid and weak, they fall into a slumber—they call it spiritual sleep; they think the soul shares in it as well

as the body, and abandon themselves to a sort of intoxication. The more they lose control, the more do their feelings get the better of them because the frame becomes more feeble. They fancy this is a trance and call it one, but I call it nonsense; it does nothing but waste their time and injure their health."

Rapture and ecstasy are described in the *Life* as of the nature of a sudden irresistible force which seems to carry the soul rapidly away, and by which it is transformed in God. The image is used of a spark which sends up a flame and of a great fire in which an iron bar is rapidly transformed so as to be indistinguishable from the fire itself, whereas the former union resembles a small fire in which a bar of iron is slowly heated to redness. With this transformation comes a revelation of truth.

"Now the succour the enraptured soul receives from heaven . . . is a most marvellous knowledge of God. When our Lord brings a soul to this state, He communicates to it of His greatest secrets by degrees." This taste of spiritual bliss brings a painful longing for God. The soul "seeks Him as He is and knows not what it seeks . . . because the imagination forms no representation whatever. . . . The soul in rapture is mistress of everything and acquires such freedom . . . as to be unable to recognize itself. . . . For my part, I believe that a soul which has reached this state neither speaks nor acts of itself, but rather that the supreme King takes care of all it has to do."

In *The Way of Perfection* the state of rapture is considered in relation to the petition "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven." With the offering up of the whole life to Christ comes the gift of new graces to the soul and the imparting to it of His secrets.

"While we do not know for what more we could ask, His Majesty never wearies of giving us fresh favours. Not contented with having united such a soul to Himself, He begins to caress it and reveal His secrets to it. . . . He deprives such a person of her exterior senses, lest they should disturb her. This produces what is called a "rapture." His friendship with her becomes so intimate that not only does He restore her will to her, but He gives her His own as well."

The necessity for self-giving is emphasized. "The soul often becomes weary of being subject to so many drawbacks, obstacles, and bonds while imprisoned in the flesh, for it longs

to pay God something of what it owes Him. This is very foolish, for when we have done all we can, what repayment can we make Him, since He has given us all we possess except self-knowledge? The one thing which by the grace of God we can do is to resign our will utterly to His." "All else only hinders the soul that He has raised to this state: humility alone can help us here, and that not a humility won by means of the intellect* but one gained by a pure intuition of the truth by which we perceive in an instant our own nothingness and the greatness of God with greater clearness than we could have learned in many years by the use of our reason."

In *The Interior Castle* St. Teresa writes in the sixth mansion of one kind of rapture in which "His Majesty appears to increase the spark I described in the interior of the spirit until it utterly inflames the soul which rises with new life like a phoenix from the flames. The soul being thus purified, God unites it to Himself in a way known only to Him and the spirit . . . yet the mind has not lost the use of its faculties, for this ecstasy does not resemble a swoon. What I do understand is that the soul has never been more alive to spiritual things nor so full of light and knowledge of His Majesty as now." She speaks of certain intellectual truths of the greatness of God which are deeply impressed on the spirit, and adds, "I think that if the soul learns no mysteries at any time during raptures, they are no true raptures, but some natural weakness that may occur to people of delicate constitution when by strenuous efforts the spirit overpowers physical nature and produces stupor, as I think I said in connection with the prayer of quiet."

Great mysteries are also revealed in that kind of rapture called "the flight of the spirit." The result of all such experience is deep contrition, humility, self-knowledge, courage, and increasingly clear conceptions of the greatness of God. Of self-knowledge, she says: "The soul is like water in a vessel which appears to be clear when the sun does not shine through it, but if it does, the water is full of motes. When the soul has attained to this state in which the Sun of Justice shines upon it and makes it open its eyes, it beholds so many motes that it would gladly close them again. It remembers the words 'who shall be just in Thy presence?'"

* "Intellect" here means discursive reason.

Very different are the effects of false raptures. The after life does not correspond with the reception of a spiritual gift. In the case of persons who, owing to bodily and mental weakness, cannot receive "interior joy" without manifestations of hysteria such as violent weeping or pseudo-insensibility St. Teresa recommends that the exercises during which such states occur should be given up and that the sufferer should be encouraged to eat and sleep well. Spiritual consolation should cause neither bodily languor nor pain. "If the nun's constitution is so delicate that this does not suffice, let her believe me when I tell her that God only calls her to the active life. . . . Employ her in the various offices and be careful that she is never left very long alone, otherwise she will entirely lose her health."

With regard to self-induced visions and locutions which have no connection with the true mystical life she writes: "I know by experience that there are souls which, either because they possess vivid imaginations or active minds . . . are so absorbed in their own ideas as to feel certain they see whatever their fancy imagines. . . . They themselves fabricate piece by piece what they fancy they see: no after-effects (of a spiritual nature) are produced on the mind . . . no attention should be paid to such fancies."

True visions are seen by the interior sight alone. "A person is far from thinking of seeing anything when suddenly the vision is revealed in its entirety, causing within the powers of the soul a fright and confusion soon changed into a blissful peace. Meanwhile certain sublime truths have been so impressed on the mind that it needs no other master."

Similarly, true locutions are "heard" in the interior of the soul, as when the saint was told "that she was to care for His affairs as though they were her own and He would care for hers" with other "words" also which "she understood better than she could repeat them."

In *The Interior Castle* it is pointed out that after the experience of divine union in any of its forms it is usual for the mind to remain less apt for meditation, having found Him Whom it sought.

"It also appears to me that as the will is already inflamed with love, this generous faculty would, if it could, cease to make use of the reason. This would be well, were it not

impossible, especially before the soul has reached the last of the mansions. Time spent in this prayer would thus be lost as the will often needs the use of the understanding to re-kindle its love. Notice this point, sisters, which as it is important I will explain more fully. Such a soul desires to spend all its time in loving God; but it cannot succeed, for though the will is not dead, yet the flame which kindled it is dying out and the spark needs fanning into a glow. Ought the soul to remain quiescent in this activity, waiting like our father Elias for fire to descend from heaven to consume the sacrifice which it makes of itself to God? Certainly not. . . . His Majesty desires us to help ourselves to the best of our abilities . . . we must search for Him."

A warning is given as to the danger of seeking the way of trance and rapture for its own sake. The well-trodden paths of prayerful action and meditation should be followed until the soul is raised to something higher. "I most earnestly advise you never to pray to be led by this way yourself though it may appear to you to be very good; indeed it ought to be highly esteemed and revered, yet no one should seek to go by it for several reasons: it is lacking in humility to desire what one does not deserve, an entrance is thus left open for illusion, for when people strongly desire such a thing the imagination makes them fancy they see or hear it." Several other reasons are given which are summed up in the last: "it is better to conform the will to the Will of God so that the soul does not go astray."

Later on she writes: "His Majesty has far higher ways of communicating Himself to the soul; they are less dangerous, for they cannot be imitated. They are more difficult to explain, being more abstruse. God is sometimes pleased, while a person is engaged in prayer and in perfect possession of her senses, to suspend them and to discover to her sublime mysteries which she appears to see within God Himself . . . nor can I rightly say the soul 'sees,' for it sees nothing . . . it is a highly intellectual vision wherein is manifested how all things are beheld in God and how He contains them within Himself. . . . Short as the time lasts, yet in a manner impossible to describe, God also manifests that in Him there is a verity which makes all truth in creatures seem obscure."

In *The Interior Castle* St. Teresa writes of a still higher kind of union. Of the seventh mansions she says: "God's immensity has no limits, neither have His works; therefore who can recount His mercies and His greatness?" Much more of the spiritual journey still lies before the soul. In this mansion the union is more perfect than in the prayer of union or in trance, rapture, or ecstasy, for in these "only the superior part of the soul was affected and the soul did not feel called to enter its own centre as it does in this mansion." Here He allows it to "see and understand something of the grace received in a strange and wonderful manner by means of intellectual vision."*

"By some mysterious manifestation of the truth the Three Persons of the most Blessed Trinity reveal themselves . . . these Three are distinct from one another; a sublime knowledge is infused into the soul imbuing it with a certainty of the truth that the Three are of one substance, power, and knowledge, and are One God." This the soul understands by "sight" though it beholds the Trinity neither by the eyes of the body nor of the soul. "All Three Persons communicate Themselves to the soul, speak to it and make it understand . . . that our Lord, the Father, and the Holy Ghost will make Their abode with the soul which loves Him and keeps His commandments. . . . Oh my God, how different from merely hearing and believing these words is it to realize their truth in this way! Day by day a growing astonishment takes possession of the soul, for the Three Powers of the Blessed Trinity never seem to depart. It sees with certainty that they dwell far within its own centre and depths.

"You may fancy that such a person is beside herself and that her mind is too inebriated to care for anything else. On the contrary, she is far more active than before in all that concerns God's service, and when at leisure she enjoys this blessed companionship.

"This Presence is not always so distinctly manifest as it is at times when God renews this favour, otherwise the recipient could not possibly attend to anything else, nor live in society. Although not always seen by so clear a light, yet whenever

* The intellect here meant is "nous" or "spirit" and is higher than the intuition, which in turn is higher than the discursive reason.

she reflects on it she feels the companionship of the Blessed Trinity. . . .

“You may ask, ‘could she not bring back the light and see them again?’ This is not in her power; when our Lord chooses He will open the shutters of her understanding. He shows great mercy in never quitting her and in making her realize it so clearly.”

St. Teresa compares the trance, rapture and ecstasy of the sixth mansions with the higher union of the seventh mansion by the use of the image of a betrothal for the former and of a marriage for the latter. The former is also compared to the union of the flames of two candles which can again be separated, while the latter is like the union of a drop of water with the ocean from which it can never again be separated; for the soul after this highest union is ever conscious in its highest part of remaining in its centre with its God, although the faculties and the body are employed about their work in the world. “As far as can be understood the soul—I mean the spirit of this soul—is made one with God Who is Himself Spirit.” The soul in this state of union does not experience ecstasies—or rarely—and these are not like the previous ones.

When the soul has thus died to itself so that Christ lives in it there is found a “self-forgetfulness so complete that she really appears not to exist, for such a transformation has been worked in her that she no longer recognizes herself but seems entirely occupied in seeking God’s interests.” The former painful longing has ceased, for the soul now has Christ for her companion. “Apparently the words spoken by His Majesty have done their work:* ‘that she was to care for His affairs and He would care for hers’ . . . I am speaking of her interior actions.” Such souls have a special love for all who bear them ill-will, and a fervent desire of serving Him, of causing Him to be praised, and of helping others to the utmost of their powers. . . . “Such a soul, thoroughly detached from all things, feels neither anxiety nor any interior troubles, but a constant tender recollection of our Lord Whom she wishes to praise unceasingly.”

At the same time, just as “interior effects show for certain

* Elsewhere in this work St. Teresa writes of true locutions, “Our Lord’s words *act* within us.”

that there is a positive difference between the soul and the spirit although they are one with each other," so "it also appears to me that the soul and its faculties are not identical—there are so many and such transcendental mysteries within us," therefore "it is not intended that the powers, senses and passions should continually enjoy this peace. The soul does so, indeed, but in the other mansions there are still times of struggle, suffering, and fatigue, though as a general rule peace is not lost by them. This 'centre of the soul' or 'spirit' is so hard to describe or even to believe in, that I think, sisters, my inability to explain my meaning saves your being tempted to believe me; it is difficult to understand how there can be crosses and sufferings and yet peace in the soul."

Much counsel is given as to the difference between true and false graces. In *The Way of Perfection* St. Teresa writes: "If anyone receives very sublime favours, let her notice whether the right effects increase with them . . . if these are not found there is cause for great fear—let no one fancy that such feelings were graces from God, for He always enriches the soul He visits. This is certain, for although the grace or consolation may pass away quickly, it is detected in time by the benefits it has left in the soul." In such a soul, fully surrendered to God, all anxiety for the body will be laid aside and His Will in the soul will bring love and forgiveness of others. "When God gives us any solid virtue it is a well known fact that it brings all the others in its train. But I warn you again to fear deception when you believe you possess such virtue. . . . Whatever favours you receive, avoid all occasions of evil—do not assure yourselves you will never relapse."

The nuns are warned against thinking others imperfect who do not follow the same path as themselves. "It is very wrong to suppose that because they are not so scrupulous, people cannot be as good as ourselves. . . . Try to realize, sisters, that God does not care for such trifling matters as you suppose. . . . Do not trammel your souls." She recommends a readiness to suffer injuries—"Oh, let us not think we do great things if we suffer injuries patiently; rather let us bear them with alacrity!"

This is no easy path, and there is need for courage. "Let there be nothing which we know would further our Lord's

service that we dare not undertake with the assistance of His grace. . . . Ever nourish this holy daring, for God aids the valiant and is no respecter of persons."

In *The Interior Castle* the whole is summed up in terms of service. "This is the end and aim of prayer, my daughters; *this* is the reason of the spiritual marriage whose children are always good works. *Works* are the unmistakable sign which shows that these favours come from God. . . . Perhaps you think that you may rest later on but, as I told you, the rest such souls feel is within them. They have less outwardly, nor do they wish for it. . . . Whatever work it does, the soul has energy for far greater tasks—all it can perform appears as nothing. . . . The company it enjoys gives it far greater strength than ever before . . . beyond doubt, with the strength thus gained the soul succours all within the castle and even the very body itself. . . .

"Without doubt if we empty ourselves of all that belongs to the creature, depriving ourselves of it for the love of God, that same Lord will fill us with Himself."

SEED THOUGHTS

The power of heaven is immense and without limit, and whatever the heavenly powers wish comes to pass.

—*Ovid.*

Philosophy, thou guide of life! Thou searcher after virtue and banisher of vice! What would not only we ourselves, but the whole life of men, have been without thine aid? It is thou that foundedst cities, gatheredst men in social union. . . . To thee we owe the devising of the laws, and thou didst guide men in righteous ways and virtuous habits. To thee we come for refuge, from thee we seek for help.

—*Cicero.*

THOUGHTS OF BLESSED RAMON LULL

Faith illumines the ways of truth with the light of love.

If thou wouldst persevere, think often upon the object of thy love.

He that continues faithfully lives joyfully.

The Holy Spirit illumines the soul of man with understanding even as the lighted candle illumines the chamber and the splendour of the sun illumines the whole world.

Thou art one only Good whence all other good descends and springs. Thy Good of Itself alone sustains all good beside. Thy Good alone is the source of my good, wherefore all my good gives and subjects itself to the honour, praise and service of Thy Good alone.

The more thou dost raise thy memory and understanding toward God, the more wilt thou love and fear Him.

Truth walks by daylight, falsehood by night.

The Lover said to the Beloved: "By many ways dost Thou come to my heart, and revealest Thyself to my sight. And by many names do I name Thee. But the love whereby Thou dost quicken me and mortify me is one, and one alone."

Sovereign Good! Alone is Thy Goodness in infinite Greatness and in Eternity and in Power, for there is none other goodness such as can be infinite, eternal and of infinite power; wherefore, O Sovereign Good, I adore Thee alone in one God Who is Sovereign in all perfections.

Deliver us, O Lord, from the evil that we have when we know Thee not and love Thee not and forget Thee; for in this evil all others have their beginning.

The more thou understandest, the better canst thou believe.

O Glory and Perfection! To give the power to sin is to give the occasion for having faith, hope, charity and the other virtues. The gift of the power to have faith, hope, charity, and the like, is a gift against gluttony, lust and the other vices. Wherefore I pray Thee to give me these virtues, and therewith freedom as to sin, that Thou mayst grant me to remember, comprehend and love Thy graces, and to remember, comprehend and cease to love my sins and the vain delights of this world.

Conscience is a messenger sent from above to make plain the will of God.

Seek thou thine end in the End of God.

Strive to know God, that thou mayst love Him the better.

Since God can do great things thou mayst ask great things of Him.

Kill thou fear with love, not love with fear.

If thou wouldst have perseverance many virtues must be thy friends.

JEWEL

You will find it less easy to uproot faults, than to choke them by gaining virtues. Do not think of your faults; still less of others' faults; in every person who comes near you look for what is good and strong: honour that; rejoice in it; and, as you can, try to imitate it; and your faults will drop off, like dead leaves, when their time is come.

—*Ruskin.*

THE SHRINE OF WISDOM
THE ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY

PROCLUS*

PROPOSITION CVIII

Every thing which is partial in each order is able to participate in a twofold respect of the monad which is in the proximately superior order, namely, either through its own wholeness, or through that which is partial in the superior order and co-ordinate with the thing according to the whole series

For if all things are converted through similitude, that which is partial in an inferior order is dissimilar to that which is monadic and a whole in a superior order, and is as that which is partial to a whole, and as one order to another. But a partial nature is similar to a whole of the same series through a communion of peculiarity, and to the proximately superior co-ordinate peculiarity through an analogous subsistence. It is evident, therefore, that through these media a conversion from one to the other is effected, as through similars to that which is similar; for the one is similar as the partial to that which is partial, but the other as that which is the appropriate of the same series. But the whole of the superior series is dissimilar in both these respects.

PROPOSITION CIX

Every partial intellect participates of the primal unity which is above intellect both through the intellect which ranks as a whole, and through the partial unity which is co-ordinate with this partial intellect. Every partial soul, likewise, participates of the intellect which is a whole, through the soul which ranks as a whole and through a partial intellect. And every partial nature of body participates of the soul which is a whole through the wholeness of nature, and a partial soul

For every thing partial participates of the monad which is in a superior order either through its wholeness, or through that which is partial in that order, and which is co-ordinate with it.

* For previous sections see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 65 to 79.

PROPOSITION CX

Of all the things that are arranged in each series, such as are first and are conjoined with their monad are able to participate of the natures which are proximately established in the superior series, through analogy: but such as are more imperfect and remote from their proper principle are not naturally adapted to enjoy these natures

For because such things as are first are allied to those in a superior series, being allotted a better and more divine nature in the order to which they belong, but such things as are more imperfect proceed further from their principle, and are allotted a secondary and ministrant, but not a primary and leading progression in the whole series; this being the case, the former are necessarily connascently conjoined to the things in a superior order; but the latter are unadapted to be conjoined with them. For all things are not of an equal dignity, though they may belong to the same order, for there is not one and the same ratio in all. But all things proceed from their proper monad, as from one, and with reference to one thing. Hence, they are not allotted the same power. But some things are able to receive proximately the participations of superior natures; while others, being dissimilar to them by proceeding to a greater distance from their principles, are deprived of a power of this kind.

PROPOSITION CXI

Of every intellectual series, some things are divine intellects, receiving the participations of the Gods, but others are intellects alone. And of every psychological series, some things are intellectual souls, suspended from their proper intellects: but others are souls alone. Of all corporeal natures, likewise, some have souls supernally presiding over them, but others are natures alone, destitute of the presence of souls

For of each series, not the whole genus is adapted to be suspended from that which is prior to itself, but only that which is more perfect in it, and sufficient to be connascent with superior natures. Neither, therefore, is every intellect suspended from Deity, but those intellects only which are supreme and most single. For these are allied to the Divine Unities. Nor do

all souls participate of participable intellect, but such only as are most intellectual. Nor do all corporeal natures enjoy the presence of soul, and of the soul which is participated, but those only that are more perfect and possess in a greater degree the form of reason. And this is the mode of demonstration in all things.

PROPOSITION CXII

Of every order those things that are first, have the form of the natures prior to them

For the highest genera in each order are conjoined through similitude to the natures placed above them, through the connexion and coherence of the progression of wholes. Hence, such as the superior natures are primarily, so also is the form which these highest genera are allotted and which is allied to the nature of those in the superior order. They are also such according to the peculiarity of subsistence as are the natures prior to them.

(To be continued)

SEED THOUGHTS

FROM JOHN SCOTUS ERIGENA

Faith I believe to be no other than a certain principle by which, in a reasonable nature, the knowledge of the Creator is derived.

So far from being of little importance, the knowledge of things sensible is exceedingly useful towards the comprehension of things intelligible. For as through the senses we arrive at intelligence, so through the creature we arrive at the Creator.

God is the beginning, the middle, and the end: the beginning, in that all things proceed from Him and participate in His essence; the middle, in that all things subsist by Him; the end, in that all things tend towards Him as their repose, as the term of their motion, as the stability of their perfection.