

Marguerite Porete

THE MIRROR OF SIMPLE SOULS

TRANSLATED AND INTRODUCED BY
ELLEN L. BABINSKY

PREFACE BY
ROBERT E. LERNER



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Chapter 1: The Prologue

Soul, touched by God and removed from sin at the first stage of grace, is carried by divine graces to the seventh stage of grace, in which state the Soul possesses the fullness of her perfection through divine fruition in the land of life.

Here Love speaks: As for you actives and contemplatives, and perhaps those annihilated by true love, you will hear some powers of pure love, of noble love, of the high love of the Unencumbered Soul; how the Holy Spirit has placed his sail in her as if she were his ship. I pray you by love, says Love, that you hear through great effort of the subtle intellect within you and through great diligence, for otherwise all those who hear it will grasp it badly, if they are not of this kind.

Thus listen with humility to a little exemplum of love in the world and listen to it as a parallel to divine love.

*Exemplum.*² Once upon a time, there was a maiden, daughter of a king, of great heart and nobility and also of noble character; and she lived in a far off land. So it happened that this maiden heard tell of the great gentle courtesy and nobility of the king, Alexander, and very soon her will loved him because of the great renown of his gentility. But this maiden was so far from this great lord, in whom she had fixed her love from herself, that she was able neither to see him nor to have him. Thus she was inconsolable in herself, for no love except this one would be sufficient for her. When she saw that this faraway love, who was so close within her, was so far outside of her, she thought to herself that she would comfort her melancholy by imagining some figure of her love, by whom she was continually wounded in heart. And so she had an image painted which would represent the semblance of the king she loved, an image as close as possible to that which presented itself to her in her love for him and in the affection of the love which captured her. And by means of this image with her other habits she dreamed of the king.

Soul: In truly similar fashion, speaks the Soul who had this book written, I tell you of such a thing: I heard tell of a King of great power who was by gentle courtesy and by very great courtesy of nobility and largesse a noble Alexander. But He was so far from me, and I from Him, that I did not know how to take comfort for myself. And for the sake of my memory of Him, He gave me this book, which makes present in some fashion His love itself. But it is no hindrance that I have His image,³ for it is not true that I am in a strange land and

far from the palace where the very noble friends of this Lord dwell, who are completely pure, perfect, and free through the gifts of this King with whom they remain.⁴

Author: Thus we shall tell you how our Lord is not at all freed from Love, but Love is from Him for us, so that the little ones might be able to hear it by means of you; for Love can do everything without any misdeed.

And thus Love speaks for your sake: There are seven stages of noble being, from which a creature receives being; so the Soul disposes herself to all the stages before she comes to perfect being. And we will tell you how before this book ends.

Chapter 2: Of the work of Love and why she has this book made.

Love: As for you little ones of Holy Church, says Love, I have made this book for you, so that you might hear in order to be more worthy of the perfection of life and the being of peace to which the creature is able to arrive through the virtue of perfect charity, the gift given by the whole Trinity, which gift you will hear explained in this book through the Intellect of Love and following the questions of Reason.

Chapter 3: Here Love speaks of the commandments of the Holy Church.

Love: Therefore we shall begin, says Love, with the commandments of the Holy Church, so that each might be able to take his nourishment in this book with the aid of God, who commands that we love Him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength; and ourselves as we ought, and our neighbors as ourselves.

First, that we love Him with all our heart: that means that our thoughts should be always truly in Him. And with all our soul: that means that until death we do not speak but the truth. And with all our strength: that is, that we accomplish all our works purely for Him. And ourselves as we ought: that means that in doing this we do not give attention to our gain but the perfect will of God. And our neighbors as ourselves: that is, that we neither do, nor think, nor speak toward our neighbors anything we would not wish they do toward us. These commands are of necessity for salvation for all: nobody can have grace with a lesser way.

Note here the example of the rich young man who said to Jesus Christ that he had kept these since infancy, and Jesus Christ said to him: "One thing is necessary for you to do, if you want to be perfect. It is: go and sell all the things which you possess and give them to the poor, and then follow me, and you will have treasure in the heavens." This is the counsel of the complete perfection of the Virtues, and whoever keeps them will live in true Charity.

Chapter 4: The noble Virtue of Charity and how she obeys none other than Love.

Love: Charity obeys no created thing except Love.

Charity possesses nothing of her own, and should she possess something she does not say that it belongs to her.

Charity abandons her own need and attends to that of others.

Charity asks no payment from any creature for some good or pleasure that she has accomplished.

Charity has no shame, nor fear, nor anxiety. She is so upright that she cannot bow on account of anything that might happen to her.

Charity neither makes nor takes account of anything under the sun, for the whole world is only refuse and leftovers.

Charity gives to all what she possesses of worth, without retaining anything for herself, and with this she often promises what she does not possess through her great largesse, in the hope that the more she gives the more remains in her.

Charity is such a wise merchant that she earns profits everywhere where others lose, and she escapes the bonds that bind others and thus she has great multiplicity of what pleases Love.

And note that the one who would have perfect charity must be mortified in the affections of the life of the spirit through the work of charity.

Chapter 5: Of the life which is called the peace of charity in the annihilated life.

[*Love*]: Thus there is another life, which we call the peace of charity in the annihilated life. Of this life, says Love, we wish to speak, in asking what one could find:

1. A Soul
2. who is saved by faith without works

3. who is only in love
4. who does nothing for God
5. who leaves nothing to do for God
6. to whom nothing can be taught
7. from whom nothing can be taken
8. nor given
9. and who possesses no will

Love: Alas, says Love, who will give to this Soul what is lacking to her, for it was not ever given, is not now given, nor will be?

Love: This Soul, says Love, has six wings like the Seraphim. She no longer wants anything which comes by a mediary. This is the proper being of the Seraphim: there is no mediary between their love and the divine Love. They always possess newness without a mediary, and so also for this Soul: for she does not seek divine knowledge among the masters of this age, but in truly despising the world and herself. Great God, how great a difference there is between a gift from a lover to a beloved through a mediary and a gift that is between lovers without a mediary!

Love: This book speaks the truth about this Soul in saying that she has six wings like the Seraphim. With two wings she covers her face from Jesus Christ our Lord. That means that the more this Soul has understanding of the divine goodness, the more perfectly she understands that she understands nothing about it, compared to one spark of His goodness, for His goodness is not comprehended except by Himself.

With two other wings she covers her feet, which means that the more she has understanding of what Jesus Christ suffered for us, the more she understands perfectly that she understands nothing about it, compared to what He suffered for us, for this is not understood except by Himself.

With the two others the Soul flies, and dwells in being and rest. Thus all that she understands, and loves and praises of the divine goodness are the wings by which she flies. Dwelling in being she is always in the sight of God; and in rest she dwells forever in the divine will.

And what, nay, how would such a Soul have fear? Certainly she would neither be able nor need to fear anything or to doubt. For even if she should be in the world, and if it should be possible that the world, flesh, devil, the four elements and the birds of the air and the

savage beasts torment and dismember or devour her, she cannot fear anything if God dwells in her. For He is everywhere present, omnipotent, omniscient, and total goodness. He is our Father, our Brother and our Loyal Lover. He is without beginning. He is incomprehensible except by Himself. He is without end, three persons and one God; and as such, says this Soul, He is the Lover of our souls.

Chapter 6: How the Soul, made loving by God, living in the peace of Charity, takes leave of the Virtues.

[*Love*]: This Soul by such love, says Love herself, can say to the Virtues that for a long time and for many days she has been in their service.

Soul: I confess it to you, Lady Love, says this Soul, there was a time when I belonged to them, but now it is another time. Your courtliness has placed me outside their service. And thus to them I can now say and sing:

Virtues, I take my leave of you forever,
I will possess a heart most free and gay;
Your service is too constant, you know well.
Once I placed my heart in you, retaining nothing;
You know that I was to you totally abandoned;
I was once a slave to you, but now am delivered from it.
I had placed my heart completely in you, you know well.
Thus I lived a while in great distress,
I suffered in many grave torments, many pains endured.
Miracle it is that I have somehow escaped alive.
This being so, I no longer care: I am parted from you,
For which I thank God on high; good for me this day.
I am parted from your dominations, which so vexed me.
I was never more free, except as departed from you.
I am parted from your dominations, in peace I rest.

Chapter 7: How this Soul is noble, and how she takes no account of anything.

[*Love*]: This Soul, says Love, takes account of neither shame nor honor, of neither poverty nor wealth, of neither anxiety nor ease, of neither love nor hate, of neither hell nor of paradise.

Reason: Ah, for God's sake, Love, says Reason, what does this mean, what you have said?

Love: What does this mean? says Love. Certainly the one knows this, and no other, to whom God has given the intellect—for Scripture does not teach it, nor the human mind comprehend it, nor does creaturely work deserve to grasp it or comprehend it. Thus this gift is given from the most High, into whom this creature is carried by the fertility of understanding, and nothing remains in her own intellect. And this Soul, who has become nothing, thus possesses everything, and so possesses nothing; she wills everything and she wills nothing; she knows all and she knows nothing.

Reason: And how can it be, Lady Love, says Reason, that this Soul can will what this book says, when before it said that she had no more will?

Love: Reason, says Love, it is no longer her will which wills, but now the will of God wills in her; for this Soul dwells not in love which causes her to will this through desiring something. Instead, Love dwells in her who seized her will, and Love accomplishes Love's will in her. Thus Love works in her without her, which is why no anxiety can remain in her.

This Soul, says Love, no longer knows how to speak about God, for she is annihilated from all her external desires and interior sentiments, from all affection of spirit; so that what this Soul does she does by practice of good habit according to the commandment of the Holy Church, without any desire, for the will is dead which gave desire to her.

Chapter 8: How Reason is surprised that this Soul has abandoned the Virtues and how Love praises them.

[*Reason*]: Ah, Love, says Reason, who can only understand the obvious and avoids subtleties, what a wonder! This Soul no longer has any sentiment of grace, nor desire of spirit, since she has taken leave of the Virtues who offer the manner of living well to every good soul, and without these Virtues none can be saved nor come to perfection of life; and whoever possesses them cannot be deceived. Nevertheless, this Soul takes leave of them. Is she not out of her mind, the Soul who speaks thus?

Love: Without a doubt, not at all, says Love, for such Souls possess

better the Virtues than any other creatures, but they do not possess any longer the practice of them, for these Souls no longer belong to the Virtues as they used to; also they have been servants long enough to become free from now on.

Reason: Ah, Love, says Reason, when were they servants?

Love: When they lived in the love and the obedience of you, Lady Reason, and also of the other Virtues. And having lived there, they have become free.

Reason: And when are such Souls freed? says Reason.

Love: When Love dwells in them, and the Virtues serve them without any contradiction and without labor by such Souls.

Love: Without a doubt, Reason, says Love, such Souls who have become so free have known many days what Dominion knows how to do. And if someone were to ask them about the greatest torment a creature could suffer, they would say that it would be to live in Love and to be still in obedience to the Virtues. For it is necessary to give to the Virtues all that they demand at whatever cost to Nature. Thus it is that the Virtues demand honor and possessions, heart and body and life. This means that such Souls leave all things, and still the Virtues say to this Soul, who gave all this to them retaining nothing to comfort Nature, they say to her that the just are saved at great pain. And so this exhausted Soul who still serves the Virtues says that she would be assaulted by Fear and tormented in hell until Judgment Day, if afterward she would be saved for sure.

And this, says Love, is the truth about the sort of Dominion in which the Soul lived and over whom the Virtues possess power. But the Souls of which we speak have perfected the Virtues, for such Souls do nothing more for the Virtues. But instead the Virtues do everything which such Souls wish, without dominating and without contradiction, for such Souls are their mistresses.

Chapter 9: How such Souls no longer possess will.

[*Love*]: Whoever would ask such free Souls, sure and peaceful, if they would want to be in purgatory, they would say no; or if they would want to be certain of their salvation in this life, they would say no; or if they would want to be in paradise, they would say no. But then with what would they will it? They no longer possess any will, and if they would desire anything, they would separate themselves from

Love. For the One who possesses their will knows what is their good, and this is their sufficiency without them knowing it and without being assured of it. Such Souls, however, live by understanding, by Love, and by praise. This is the habitual practice of such Souls without moving themselves, for Understanding, Love and Praise dwell in them. Such Souls do not know how to consider themselves good or evil, no longer possessing understanding of themselves, nor knowing how to judge if they are converted or perverted.

Love: To speak more briefly, let us take one Soul as an example, says Love. Such a Soul neither desires nor despises poverty nor tribulation, neither mass nor sermon, neither fast nor prayer, and gives to Nature all that is necessary, without remorse of conscience. But such Nature is so well ordered through the transformation by unity of Love, to whom the will of this Soul is conjoined, that Nature demands nothing which is prohibited. Such a Soul has no anxiety about anything which she lacks, unless it is in the hour of her necessity. And no one can lose this anxiety if he is not innocent.

Reason: For the sake of God! says Reason. What are you saying?

Love: I answer you thus, Reason, says Love. As I said to you before, and again I say it to you, that none of the masters of the natural senses, nor any the masters of Scripture, nor those who remain in the love of the obedience to the Virtues, none perceive this, nor will they perceive what is intended. But of this be certain, Reason, says Love, for no one perceives it except those whom Fine Love⁶ calls. But if by chance one finds such Souls, they will speak the truth about it, if they wish. And do not think that anyone can understand them, but only those whom Fine Love and Charity call.

This gift, says Love, is given any time in a moment of an hour, and whoever possesses it guards it, for it is the most perfect gift which God gives to a creature. This Soul is a student of Divinity, and she sits in the valley of Humility and on the plain of Truth, and rests on the mountain of Love.

Chapter 10: How Love names the Soul by twelve names for the Actives⁷ at the request of Reason.

Reason: Ah, Love, says Reason, name this Soul by her right name, give to the Actives some understanding of it.

Love: She can be named, says Love, by twelve names; that is:

The very marvelous one.
 The Not Understood.
 Most Innocent of the Daughters of Jerusalem.⁸
 She upon whom the Holy Church is founded.
 Illuminated by Understanding.
 Adorned by Love.
 Living by Praise.
 Annihilated in all things through Humility.
 At peace in divine being through divine will.
 She who wills nothing except the divine will.
 Filled and satisfied without any lack by divine goodness
 through the work of the Trinity.
 Her last name is: Oblivion, Forgotten.

These twelve names Love gives to her.

Pure Courtesy: And without fail, says Pure Courtesy, it is right that she be thus named, for these are her right names.

Reason: Ah, Love, you have named this Soul by many names, by which the Actives have some understanding of her, which would only be by hearing the very noble names by which you have named her.

Chapter 11: How, at the request of Reason, Love gives understanding of this Soul to the Contemplatives, in declaring nine points, which were mentioned before.

Reason: Now, Love, says Reason, I pray you for the Contemplatives, who always desire to increase in divine understanding and who are and remain in desire of Love, that by your courtesy you explain the nine points of which you have spoken before, these nine points which this Soul possesses, whom Fine Love calls, in whom Charity is dwelling and rests through the annihilated life, by which the Soul is released through Pure Love.

Love: Reason, says Love, you name them.

Reason: The first point, says Reason, which you said is that one cannot find such a Soul.

Love: This is true, says Love. This means that this Soul knows in herself only one thing, that is, the root of all evil and the abundance of

all sins without number, without weight, and without measure. And sin is nothing. This Soul is completely submerged and tormented by these horrible faults of hers, which are less than nothing, and by means of this intellect this Soul is less than nothing, as long as she is with herself. Thus one can conclude that one cannot find this Soul, because such a Soul is so annihilated by humility that no creature who ever sinned merits so great a torment, so great a shame without end, as she according to her right judgment, so that God would wish to take vengeance for one thousandth of her faults. Such humility is true humility and it is perfected in the Annihilated Soul and none other.
Love: The second point is that this Soul is saved by faith without works.

Reason: For God's sake! says Reason, what can that mean?

Love: This means, says Love, that such an Annihilated Soul possesses so great understanding within her by the virtue of faith, that she is so occupied within herself with the sustenance which Faith administers to her of the power of the Father, of the wisdom of the Son, and of the goodness of the Holy Spirit, that a created thing, which passes briefly, cannot dwell in her memory, on account of this other occupation which surrounds the intellect of this Annihilated Soul. This Soul knows no longer how to work, and without fail she is thus excused and exonerated, without works, by believing that God is good and incomprehensible. This one is saved by faith without works, because faith surpasses all work, as Love herself witnesses.

Love: The third point is that she is alone in Love.

Reason: For God's sake, Lady Love, says Reason, what does this mean?

Love: This means, says Love, that this Soul possesses no comfort, nor affection, nor hope in a creature which God has created, nor in heaven, nor in earth, but only in the goodness of God. Such a Soul neither begs nor asks anything of any creature. She is the phoenix who is alone; for this Soul is alone in Love who alone is satisfied in her.

Love: The fourth point is that this Soul does nothing for God.

Reason: Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, what does this mean?

Love: This means, says Love, that God has nothing to do with her work, and this Soul does only what it is God's work to do. She does not care about herself. She cares about God, who loves her more than this Soul could love herself. This Soul has so great a faith in God that she has no fear of being poor, as long as her Lover is rich. For Faith

teaches her that as much as she hopes in God, so she will find Him, and she hopes through faith that He is totally rich, which is why she cannot be poor.

Love: The fifth point is that this Soul omits nothing to do for God which she might be able to do.

Reason: Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, what does this mean?

Love: This means, says Love, that she cannot do anything if it is not the will of God, and also she cannot will some other thing; and so she omits nothing to do for God. She does not allow something to enter into her thought which might be contrary to God, and for this reason she omits nothing to be done for God.

Love: The sixth point is that one cannot teach her anything.

Reason: Ah, for God's sake, says Reason, what does this mean?

Love: This means that this Soul is so well established⁹ that if she possessed all the understanding of all the creatures who ever were and who are and who are to come, so it would seem to her as nothing, compared to what she loves, which never was understood, is not now, and never will be. This Soul loves better what is in God, which never was given, is not now, nor ever will be given, than she [loves] what she possesses and what she will possess. Thus it is that she must possess all the understanding which all the creatures possess who are and who are to come.

[*Soul*]: And yet this is nothing, says this Soul, compared to what He is in Himself, but one cannot speak of it.

Love: The seventh point is that one cannot take anything from her.

Reason: Ah, for God's sake, Love, says Reason, say what this means.

Love: What does this mean? says Love. And what would one take from her? Certainly one could not take anything from her. For whoever would take from this Soul honor, wealth and friends, heart and body and life, still would take nothing from her, if God remains with her. Which is why it appears that one cannot take anything away from her, no matter how strong one is.

Love: The eighth point is that one cannot give anything to her.

Reason: Love, for God's sake, says Reason, what does this mean, that one cannot give anything to her?

Love: What does this mean? says Love. And what would one give to her? If one would give to her all that which ever was given and which will be given, this would be nothing compared to what she loves and will love.

If not God Himself, and the Soul says, Lady Love, [who] loves in me and will love [in me].¹⁰

[*Love*]: Guard your reverence, says Love, I am not [responding to] that. We will say, says Love for the sake of the hearers, that God loves better the greater part of this Soul in Him than the lesser part that is of herself.

But the Soul says: There is no lesser part, there is nothing except the All. This I can say well and truthfully.

[*Love*]: I say as well, says Love, that if this Soul would possess all the understanding and the love and the praise which ever was given and will be given by the divine Trinity, this would be nothing compared to what she loves and will love. And she will never attain this love through understanding.

Soul speaks to Love: Ah, certainly not, sweet Love, says the Soul. [She will attain] not even the least bit without more of my love. For God is none other than the One of whom one can understand nothing perfectly. For He alone is my God, about whom one does not know how to say a word. Not [even] all those in paradise know how to attain a single point, however much understanding they might possess of Him. And in this greater part, says this Soul, is enclosed the supreme mortification of the love of my spirit. It is the total glory of the love of my soul, and will be forever, and of all those who will ever grasp it.

This point is a small one to hear, says this Soul, compared to the greatest, of which no one speaks. But I want to speak about it and I don't know what to say about it. Nevertheless, Lady Love, she says, my love is so certain that I would prefer to hear something slanderous about you than that one should say nothing about you. And without fail I do this: I slander because everything I say is nothing but slander about your goodness. But whatever slander I commit must be pardoned me by you.

Because, my Lady, says the Soul, one slanders you who always speaks of you, even if nothing were said of your goodness. In similar fashion I speak of you myself. I have not finished speaking of you, whether by questions or through thoughts, or in hearing, if one tells me something of your goodness. But the more I hear tell of you the more I am amazed. For this would be for me a great villainy: that one should feign discernment to me, that one should pretend to tell me something. For they are deceived who believe it, because I certainly know that one cannot say anything. And, please God, I will never be

deceived and wish never to hear lying about your divine goodness, but that I might accomplish the enterprise of this book, of which Love is the mistress, who tells me that I complete all my enterprises in it. For insofar as I ask of Love something for myself on account of love,¹¹ I will be with myself in the life of the spirit, in the shadow of the sun where one cannot see the subtle images of the drawing power of divine Love and of the divine generation.

And what do I say? says this Soul. Certainly still this is nothing, because should I possess all that is said, compared to what I love of Him, which He will give to no one except to Himself; and it is necessary for Him to retain such for the sake of his divine righteousness. And thus I say, and it is true, that one cannot give to me anything which might be able to be. And this lament, about which you hear me complain, dear Reason, says this Soul, is my All and my Good, grasp it well. Ah, how it is [a] sweet goal. For God's sake, grasp the whole, for paradise is nothing other than this perception. *Love*: The ninth point, Lady Reason, says Love, is that this Soul possesses no will.

[*Reason*]: Ah, for the sake of God's love, what are you saying? You say that this Soul has no will?

Love: Ah, without fail, it is so. Because all that this Soul wills in consent is what God wills that she will, and this she wills in order to accomplish the will of God, no longer for the sake of her own will. And she cannot will this by herself, but it is the will of God which wills it in her. Which is why it appears that this Soul has no will without the will of God, who makes her will all that she ought to will.

Chapter 12: The true intellect by which this book says in different places, that the Annihilated Soul possesses no will.

[*Love*]: Now listen and grasp well, hearers of this book, the true intellect by which this book speaks in different places, that the Annihilated Soul neither possesses will, nor is able to possess it, nor is able to will to possess it, and in this the divine will is perfectly accomplished. The Soul does not possess sufficiency of divine Love, nor divine Love sufficiency of the Soul, until the Soul is in God and God in the Soul, of Him, through Him, in such a state of divine rest. Then the Soul possesses all her sufficiency.

Intellect of Reason: True, but it seems, says Intellect of Reason, that the ninth point says completely the contrary, for it states that the Annihilated Soul wills nothing compared to what she would will to will, which will she cannot possess, for God wills that she wills that her will be nothing compared to His sufficiency, which never will be given to her.

Reason: I perceive in this, says Reason, that the Soul wills to will, and that God wills that she will one will, which she cannot possess, and from this [she] has a lack and no sufficiency.

Intellect of Reason: It seems to me, Lady Love, says Intellect of Reason, that the ninth point makes me perceive this, contradicting this book, which point says indeed that the Unencumbered Soul neither possesses will, nor is able to possess it, nor is able to will to possess it, nor does the divine Unity will that she possess it, and so [she] possesses her full sufficiency in all things through divine Love, as this book says.

Soul: Ah, Intellect of Reason, says the Annihilated Soul, how you are so discerning! You take the shell and leave the kernel, for your intellect is too low, hence you cannot perceive so loftily as is necessary for the one who wishes to perceive the being of which we speak. But Intellect of Divine Love, who remains and is in the Annihilated Soul and who is unencumbered, grasps it well without hesitation, for she is this herself.

The Height of Intellect of Love: Now, Intellect of Reason, says the Height of Intellect of Love, understand now the coarse nature of your defective perception. If this Annihilated Soul wills the will of God—and the more she wills it, the more she would will to will it—she cannot possess this through the smallness of creaturehood, because God retains the grandeur of His divine righteousness. But God wills that she would will this, and that she would possess such a will. Such a will is the divine will, which gives being to a free creature. This divine will, which God makes her will, courses through her in the veins of divine Understanding and the marrow of divine Love and the union of divine Praise. But the [created] will of the Soul inhibits these.

[*Love*]: Therefore, says Love, how can the Soul possess will, since Clear Understanding understands that the will is one being among the beings, the most noble of all the beings, which a creature cannot possess if she possesses it by willing nothing?

Now Reason has heard, says Love, the answer to her questions, except that [question] where Reason says that the Unencumbered Soul possesses in her a lack of sufficiency. I will tell her in what she has a lack of sufficiency: it is from willing the divine will, which the more one wills it, one possesses less of such a willing of his sufficiency. But this same will is the will of God alone and the glory of the Soul.

Chapter 13: How Reason is content with the explanation of the things said above for the Contemplatives and the Actives, but she asks again for the sake of the common folk.

Reason: Now, Love, says Reason, you have condescended to our prayer, that is, to have declared the things said above for the Actives and Contemplatives. I pray again that you declare them for the sake of the common folk, of whom some will be able perchance to come to this stage, for there are several double words which are hard to grasp with their intellect. If you explain, this book will show to all the true light of Truth, and the perfection of Charity, and those who are preciousely elected by God and called and supremely loved by Him.

Love: Reason, says Love, where are these double words, which you pray me to distinguish and clarify for the profit of those for whose sake you make to us so humble a request, and also for the hearers of this book, which we will name the "Mirror of Simple Souls Who Remain in Will and Desire"?

Reason: To this we respond to you, Lady Love, says Reason, that this book says greatly admiring things about this Soul—that is, in the seventh chapter—that this Soul takes no account of shame, nor of honor, nor of poverty, nor of wealth, not of ease nor of anxiety, not of love nor of hate, not of hell nor of paradise. And with this it says that this Soul possesses all and possesses nothing, she knows all and knows nothing, she wills all and wills nothing, as it says above in the ninth chapter. And so [the Soul], says Reason, neither desires nor despises poverty, neither martyrdom nor tribulations, neither masses nor sermons, not fasts nor prayers, and who gives to Nature all she asks of her without remorse of conscience.

And without fail, Love, says Reason, this no one can grasp with my intellect if he is not taught it by you through your teaching. For

my intellect and my judgment and all my counsel is the best that I know how to counsel: that one desire contempt, poverty, and all manner of tribulations, and masses and sermons, and fasts and prayers, that one have fear of all kinds of love, whatever they might be, for the perils which can be there, and that one desire above all paradise, and that one have fear of hell; that one refuse all manner of honors and temporal things, and all comforts, in obstructing Nature [in] what she asks, except those things without which the Soul could not live, as in the exemplar of the suffering and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the best, says Reason, that I know how to say and counsel all those who live in my obedience. Thus I say to all, that none will grasp this book with my intellect unless they grasp it by the virtue of Faith, and by the power of Love, who are my mistresses because I obey them in all things. And moreover I wish to say, says Reason, that whoever has these two strings in his bow, that is, the light of Faith and the power of Love, has permission to do all that pleases him, by the witness of Love herself, who says to the Soul: My love, love and do what you will.¹²

Love: Reason, says Love, you are very wise and very certain about what is fitting for you, and you wish to have response to the words said above. And because you have prayed me that I state the meaning, I will respond to all your questions. I guarantee you, Reason, says Love, that such Souls, whom Fine Love governs, possess as equally dear, shame as honor, and honor as shame; poverty as wealth, and wealth as poverty; torment from God and his creatures, as comfort from God and His creatures; to be loved as hated, and hated as loved; to be in hell as in paradise, and in paradise as in hell; and in small estate as in great, and great estate as small: [this] for themselves and for their station in life. And Truth knows this well, that they neither will nor not-will anything of these prosperities nor of these adversities. For such Souls no longer possess any will, except what God wills in them, and the divine will does not occupy these lofty creatures with such encumbrances as we have described.

Love: I have already said above, says Love, that such Souls possess as equally dear all adversities of heart—for the body and for the soul—as prosperity, and prosperity as adversity. And it is true, says Love, if the adversities and prosperities come to them, their will would not be the cause of it. And also these Souls know not what is best for them, nor in what manner God wishes to find their salvation or the salva-

tion of their neighbors, nor by what means God wishes to dispense justice or mercy, nor through what means God wishes to give to the Soul the supreme gift of the goodness of His divine nobility. And for this the Unencumbered Soul possesses no longer any will to will or not-will, except only to will the will of God, and to accept in peace the divine ordinance.

Reason: Still, Lady Love, I add one thing to my question; that is, that this book says that this Soul possesses all things and so possesses nothing.

Love: This is true, says Love, for this Soul possesses God by divine grace, and whoever possesses God, possesses all things. And so [the book] says she possesses nothing, for all that this Soul possesses from God within her by the gift of divine grace, seems to be nothing to her. And thus it is [nothing] compared to what she loves, which is in Him, which He will not give to anyone except Himself. And according to this intellect this Soul possesses all and so possesses nothing, she knows all and so knows nothing.

Chapter 14: How this Soul by faith has understanding of God.

[Love]: She knows, says Love, by the virtue of Faith, that God is all Power, and all Wisdom, and perfect Goodness, and that God the Father has accomplished the work of the Incarnation, and the Son also and the Holy Spirit also. Thus God the Father has joined human nature to the person of God the Son, and the person of God the Son has joined [human nature] to the person of Himself, and God the Holy Spirit has joined [human nature] to the person of God the Son. So then God possesses in Him one sole nature, that is divine nature; and the person of the Son possesses in Him three natures, that is, this same nature which the Father possesses, and the nature of the soul and the nature of the body, and is a person of the Trinity; and the Holy Spirit possesses in Him this same divine nature which the Father and the Son possess. To believe this, to say this, to think this is true contemplation. This is one Power, one Wisdom, and one Will. One God alone in three persons, three persons and one God alone. This God is everywhere in His divine nature, but humanity is glorified in paradise, joined to the person of the Son as well as to the Sacrament of the Altar.

Chapter 15: Here is spoken of the Sacrament of the Altar.¹³

[Love]: True Christians receive this divinity and this humanity when they take the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. How this humanity remains with them is taught by Faith, and the clergy know this.

Light of Faith: And for this purpose we will tell you, says Light of Faith, how we will make a comparison of this Sacrament in order to grasp it better.

Take this Sacrament, place it in a mortar with other things, and grind this Sacrament until you can no longer see nor feel the Person which you have placed there.

Faith: I tell you truly, says Faith, that He is not there. Now you can ask therefore, "Has he thus gone away from it?"

Truth: Not at all, says Truth. He was there, but now He is there no longer (understand in a holy way, not humanly). Now you can ask if the humanity has gone away, as it thus came into it. I say to you, says Truth, that the humanity of Jesus Christ neither comes nor goes.

Temptation: What can this be, then? says Temptation.

Truth: It was there, says Truth, when one could see and feel it, and now it is no longer there, since one cannot see or feel it. Thus had divine power ordained it. This same humanity, which belongs to the Sacrament of the Altar, is not seen in another semblance, [and] neither the angels nor the saints nor the Virgin Mary see it other than as we see it ourselves. And if they see it in the semblance that we see it, it is by the intellect of the spirit. For to see the glorified humanity of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar pertains no longer to the glory of those who are in glory and therefore they no longer see Him glorified except by [this] intellect.

[The Soul by Faith]: And we see [the glorified humanity] by the virtue of Faith, in contradicting the reason of our mind which sees nothing there but bread, nor anything else not felt or tasted or smelled. But our faith contradicts all these for it believes firmly, without doubt, that there is neither whiteness, nor odor, nor taste, but it is the precious body of Jesus Christ who is true God and true man. Thus we see it by faith. And those in glory do not do this, for a thing glorified no longer uses faith, and thus they do not see it as we do. The divine Trinity has ordained the Holy Sacrament of the Altar in such being for the purpose of feeding and nourishing and sustaining