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Abandonment to Divine Providence

- In the old days people were less complex and more straightforward. Then they knew only that each moment brought a duty, which must be faithfully fulfilled. Those spiritually inclined needed nothing more. (I,1)
- This was the hidden motive of Mary's behavior. She was the simplest of humans and the one who made the most complete surrender of herself to God. Her laconic reply to the angel--"Let what you have said be done to me" (Luke 1:38)---embodies all the mystical theology of her ancestors. This, then as now, meant the most direct and wholehearted surrender to God's will, however it revealed itself. (I,1)
- But what was the bread, which nourished the faith of Mary and Joseph? It was the sacrament of the moment. But what did they experience beneath an existence apparently filled with nothing but humdrum happenings? On the surface it was similar to that of everyone around them, but faith, piercing the superficialities, disclosed that God was accomplishing very great things. O bread of angels, heavenly manna, pearl of the Gospels, sacrament of the present moment! You give God under such lowly forms as the stable, the manger, the hay and the straw. But to whom do you give him? "The hungry he hath filled with good things" (Luke 1:53). God reveals himself to the humble in the lowliest of disguises, but the proud, who never look below the surface, fail to find him even in his greatest manifestations. (I,2)
- If the business of becoming holy seems to present insufferable difficulties, it is merely because we have a wrong idea about it. In reality, holiness consists of one thing only: complete loyalty to God's will. Now everyone can practice this loyalty, whether actively or passively. To be actively loyal means obeying the laws of God and the Church and fulfilling all the duties imposed on us by our way of life. Passive loyalty means that we lovingly accept all that God sends us at each moment of the day. (I,3)
- We must regard everything else with complete indifference and as something worth nothing at all. As we see only God in everything, we must take or leave all things according to his will, so that we neither live, nor develop, nor hope except as he ordains, and never try to use things which have neither power nor worth except through him. We must at all times and in all circumstances say with St. Paul: "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6) (I,6).
- If we do not concentrate entirely on doing the will of God we shall find neither happiness nor holiness, no matter what pious practices we adopt, however excellent they may be. If you are not satisfied with what God chooses for you, what else can please you? Does the food prepared for you by God himself disgust you? Well, can you say what other food would not seem stale to someone with so perverted a taste? We must realize that we cannot be really fed, strengthened,

purified, enriched and made holy unless we fulfill the duties of the present moment. What else do you want? Why look elsewhere? Are you wiser than God? Why do you seek anything different from what he desires? Do you imagine, considering his wisdom and goodness, that he can be wrong? (I,7)

- Our holiness is measured by our love of God, and it increases in proportion to the growth of our desire to obey his will and his plans for us, no matter what they are. We can see this in Jesus, Mary and Joseph. (I,8)
- Let them realize this---and then how happy they will be! Let them realize that all they have to do to achieve the height of holiness is to do only what they are already doing and endure what they are already enduring, and to realize, too, that all they count as trivial and worthless is what can make them holy. How I would like to preach the virtues of your holy will and teach everyone that nothing is easier, more ordinary and more within reach than holiness! (I,9)
- There is never a moment when God does not come forward in the guise of some suffering or some duty, and all that takes place within us, around us and through us both includes and hides his activity...If we could lift the veil and if we watched with vigilant attention, God would endlessly reveal himself to us and we should see and rejoice in his active presence in all that befalls us. At every moment we should exclaim: "It is the Lord!" (II,1)
- It is faith which interprets God for us. Without its light we should not even know that God was speaking, but would hear only the confused, meaningless babble of creatures. As Moses saw the flame of fire in the bush and heard the voice of God coming from it, so faith will enable us to understand his hidden signs, so that amidst all the apparent clutter and disorder we shall see all the loveliness and perfection of divine wisdom. Faith transforms the earth into paradise. By it our hearts are raised with the joy of our nearness to heaven. Every moment reveals God to us. Faith is our light in this life. (II,1)
- If we know that someone in disguise is really our king we shall behave very differently toward him than will someone who sees only an ordinary man. He will treat him as such. Now, if we see the will of God in the most trifling affairs, in every misfortune, and in every disaster, we shall accept them all with an equal joy, delight and respect. What others fear and flee from, we shall welcome with open doors. The clothing is shabby and mean to the ordinary eye, but we shall respect the royal majesty hidden under it and feel a deepening of our love the more hidden and abject our king is. I cannot describe what the heart feels when it accepts the divine will so apparently diminished in power, so humble and so pitiful. How profoundly moved Mary's loving heart was when she saw the poverty of her God, lying whimpering and trembling on a bundle of hay in a manger! If we could ask the people of Bethlehem what they thought of this child, we know what answer we should get. Yet, had he been born in a palace surrounded with the trappings of a prince, they would have rushed to pay him honor. But, let us ask Mary, Joseph, the Magi and shepherds, and they will tell us that in this utter poverty they find something indescribable which increases the glory of God and his attractiveness...The battle with our senses gives our faith a splendid victory...The life of faith is the untiring pursuit of God through all that disguises and disfigures him and, as it were, destroys and annihilates him. Look at Mary: from the stable to Calvary she stayed close to that

God who was despised, rejected and persecuted. So it is with all faithful souls. They have to pass through a steady succession of veils and shadows and illusions which seek to hide the will of God, but they follow and love it even to the death on the cross. They know that they must leave the shadows and run after this divine sun which, from its rising to its setting and no matter how thick and dark the clouds hiding it, illumines, warms and sets aglow the loyal hearts who bless, praise and contemplate it as it sweeps along its mysterious course. Let us, then, as faithful souls, happy and tireless, advance after the beloved as he moves with giant strides across the heavens. He sees all things. He walks above the smallest blades of grass and the cedar groves, and treads the grains of sand as well as the mountain peaks. Wherever we have trodden he has been, and if we constantly pursue him we shall find him no matter where we are. There is no peace more wonderful than the peace we enjoy when faith shows us God in all created things. All that is dark becomes light, and what is bitter sweet. Faith transforms ugliness into beauty, and malice into kindness. Faith is the mother of tenderness, trust and joy. It cannot feel anything but love and pity for its enemies, by whom it is so greatly enriched, for the more harsh the actions of creatures against us, the more beneficial God makes them for our souls. The human instrument tries to injure us, but the divine craftsman, in whose hands it is, ensures that it takes from our souls all that would harm them. The will of God has only delights, favors and riches for all souls who are obedient to it. We cannot trust it too much or abandon ourselves to it too completely. If we leave everything to God, he will do all that is necessary for our holiness. Faith cannot doubt this. The more unreliable, disgusted, despairing and unsure of themselves our senses are, the more emphatically does faith exclaim: "God is here! All goes well!" There is nothing that faith cannot overcome. It pierces through the darkest shadows and the thickest clouds to reach the truth, embraces it and can never be torn from it. (II,2)

- The present moment is always overflowing with immeasurable riches, far more than you are able to hold. Your faith will measure it out to you: as you believe, so you will receive. Love, too, is also a measure. The more you love the more you will want and the more you will get: Every moment the will of God is stretched out before us like a vast ocean which the desires of our hearts can never empty, but more and more of it will be ours as our souls grow in faith, in trust and in love. The entire universe cannot fill and satisfy our hearts, for they are greater than all apart from God. Mountains which overawe us are but tiny grains to our hearts. We must draw upon that will veiled and hidden beneath every little detail of our lives and shall find there a fullness, an amplitude infinitely more vast than all our longings. Fawn upon no one and have no illusions. They can do nothing for us. The will of God alone can satisfy us. That is what we must adore and drive direct toward it, casting aside all superficialities. Strip away the fascination of the senses, kill and destroy them, and then you will be ruled by faith, for your senses worship created things. Take away from the senses what they worship and they will weep like deserted children, but faith must triumph, for nothing can destroy the will of God. (II,3)
- Now let me tell you that the will of God is all that is necessary, and what it does not give you is of no use to you at all. My friends, you lack nothing. You would be very ashamed if you knew what the experiences you call setbacks, upheavals, pointless disturbances, and tedious annoyances really are. You would realize that your complaints about them are nothing more nor less than blasphemies---though that never occurs to you. Nothing happens to you except by the will of God, and yet his beloved children curse it because they do not know it for what it is. (II,6)

- The Gospel tells us how he "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52), although, as God, all wisdom was already his. This knowledge that comes to us only through experience is absolutely necessary if we want to touch the hearts of those God sends to us. We can understand nothing perfectly except what experience has taught through what we have suffered and done. Our master is the Holy Spirit, who gives us these words of life, and all we say to others must come from him. (II,8)
- Are we thirsty? Then we have not far to go to find the fountain of living water. It bubbles up near us at every moment. How foolish it is to tire ourselves by searching for tiny rivulets which can never quench our thirst. Only the fountain can satisfy us. It is inexhaustible. Do you want to think, write and live like prophets, apostles and saints? Then you must surrender, as they did, to the inspirations of God. (II,9)
- Can we imagine that in the days of old there was a secret method of abandoning oneself to the divine will that is now out of date? And had the saints of those early times any other secret apart from that of obeying God's will from moment to moment? And will not God continue until the end of the world to pour out his grace upon all the souls who utterly abandon themselves to him? (II,9)
- We must strip ourselves naked, renounce all desire for created things, and retain nothing of ourselves or for ourselves, so that we can be wholly submissive to God's will and so delight him. Our only satisfaction must be to live in the present moment as if there were nothing to expect beyond it. (II,10)
- God's action penetrates every atom of your body, into the very marrow of your bones. The blood flowing through your veins moves only by his will. The state of your health, whether you are weak or strong, lively or languid, your life and death, all spring from his will, and all your bodily conditions are the workings of grace. (II,11)
- The truly faithful soul, well versed in all the secrets of God, lives in peace, and, instead of being frightened by what happens to it, is comforted, for it is quite, quite certain that God is guiding it. It accepts all things as a manifestation of God's grace, ignores itself and thinks only of what God is doing. Love inspires it to perform its duties most carefully and faithfully. (IV,1)
- We cannot be settled in the state of pure love until we have experienced a lot of setbacks and many humiliations. We must reach the stage when all that the world contains ceases to exist and God is everything to us. (IV,2)
- Thus we have two duties to fulfill: we must actively seek to carry God's will into effect and passively accept all that his will sends us. As I have already said, this state is essentially the gift of our entire being to God for him to use as he pleases. (IV,3)
- So there are duties which are ordered and must be done. There is also the duty of remaining quite passive and abandoned. And there is a third type of duty---obeying those promptings with which God moves all of us who are submissive to him. To perform this last duty we must have a great

deal of simplicity, a gentle cheerfulness, and we must also respond at once to the breath of grace. (IV,3)

- ...without God's will there can be only turmoil...When will God be all in all to us? Let us live entirely for God. (IV,5)
- If we have abandoned ourselves, there is only one rule for us: the duty of the present moment. The soul is as light as a feather, as fluid as water, simple as a child and as lively as a ball in responding to all the impulses of grace. We are like molten metal which takes the shape of the mold into which it is poured, and can just as easily assume any form God wishes to give us. We are like the air which stirs continually, or water which fills every vessel no matter what its shape. (IV,6)
- For example, let's take a piece of stone destined to be carved into a crucifix or a statue. We might ask it: "What do you think is happening to you?" And it might answer: "Don't ask me. All I know is that I must stay immovable in the hands of the sculptor, and I must love him and endure all he inflicts on me to produce the figure he has in mind. He knows how to do it. As for me, I have no idea what he is doing, nor do I know what he will make of me. But what I do know is that his work is the best possible. It is perfect. I welcome each blow of his chisel as the best thing that could happen to me, although, if I'm to be truthful, I feel that every one of these blows is ruining me, destroying me and disfiguring me. But I remain unconcerned. I concentrate on the present moment, think only of my duty, and suffer all that this master sculptor inflicts on me without knowing his purpose or fretting about it." (IV,6)
- When God becomes our guide he insists that we trust him without reservations and put aside all nervousness about his guidance. We are sent along the path he has chosen for us, but we cannot see it...Divine action is always new and fresh, it never retraces its steps, but always finds new routes...God's activity can never be anything but good, and does not need to be reformed or controlled. It began at the creation of the world and up to now has continued with the same energy, which knows no limits. Its fertility is inexhaustible. It does one thing today, another tomorrow, yet it is the same activity which every moment produces constantly fresh results, and it will continue throughout eternity. It produced Abel, Noah and Abraham---all different types. Isaac is also original. Jacob is not a duplicate of him, nor is Joseph a facsimile of Jacob. Moses is different from his ancestors. David and the prophets bear no resemblance to the patriarchs. John the Baptist stands alone. Jesus Christ is the first-born, and the Apostles are moved more by the guidance of his spirit than by imitating his works...it is this same Jesus Christ, always alive and active, who continues to live and work fresh wonders in the souls of those who love him...To let God act and obey his demands on us: that is the gospel and the whole scripture and the law. (IV,7)
- Nothing is safer than the way of self-abandonment, nor is anything plainer, easier or more enjoyable and less subject to blunders and errors. God is loved, Christian duties are fulfilled, we frequent the sacraments and perform every one of those outward, visible acts of religion which are binding on everyone. Our superiors are obeyed and our normal duties are fulfilled. We always resist the temptations of the flesh and the devil, for no one is more careful and alert in doing what they have to than those who walk along this way. (V,1)

- Everyone values them about as much as Herod and his court esteemed Jesus. As far as their senses and mind are concerned, these poor souls are disgusted. Nothing pleases them. They crave for something completely different, but every road which leads to the sanctity they long for is blocked. They must live on this bitter bread of anguish and exist under unrelenting pressure, for they have a conception of sanctity which never ceases to torment them. Their will hungers for it, but they cannot attain it. Why is this? Surely it is to mortify them spiritually so that they can find no pleasure or satisfaction in anything, but must give all their affection to God. He deliberately leads them along this path so that he alone can delight them. (V,3)
- In that state they surrender to God all their rights over themselves, over their thoughts, their words, their actions and the use they make of every moment. They have only one duty: to keep their gaze fixed on their Master, listen intently to what he wishes and then do it at once. They are exactly like a servant who instantly obeys every order his master gives and never spares a second for his own affairs, which he ignores so that he can serve his master at any moment. (V,3)
- To live by faith is to live joyfully, to live with assurance, untroubled by doubts and with complete confidence in all we have to do and suffer at each moment by the will of God. We must realize that it is in order to stimulate and sustain this faith that God allows the soul to be buffeted and swept away by the raging torrent of so much distress, so many troubles, so much embarrassment and weakness, and so many setbacks. For it is essential to have faith to find God behind all this. The divine life is neither seen nor felt, but there is never a moment when it is not acting in an unknown but very sure manner. (V,5)
- "Truly," said Jacob, "God is in this place and I never knew it" (Gen. 28:16). You seek for God, beloved soul, and he is everywhere, everything speaks of him, everything offers him to you, he walks beside you, he surrounds you and is within you. He lives with you and yet you try to find him. You seek your own idea of God, although you have him in his reality. You seek perfection and you meet it in all that happens to you. All you suffer, all you do, all your inclinations are mysteries under which God gives himself to you while you are vainly straining after high-blown fancies...When the Apostles saw Jesus they thought he was a ghost. God disguises himself so that we may reach that pure faith which enables us to recognize him under any appearance. When we know this secret of his, it is useless for him to assume any disguise, for we say: "See where he stands behind our wall. He looks in at the window, he peers through the lattice" (Song of Songs 2:9)...How mistaken we are not to see you in everything that is good and in every creature. Why should we seek you in any other way than that by which you wish to give yourself, under any other forms than those you have chosen for your sacrament? The less convincing they seem, the more merit there is in our obedience and faith. (V,5)
- There is a kind of holiness in which all the messages from God are bright and clear, but there is also that state of utterly quiescent faith in which all that God tells us is wrapped in the impenetrable darkness, which veils his throne, and all we feel is confused and shadowy. In this condition, we are often afraid, like the prophet, of running smack into a rock as we advance through this darkness. We should have no fear. We are on the right path and led by God. There is nothing safer and less likely to lead us astray than the darkness of faith. For it is impossible for God to guide a soul without giving it the certainty that it is on the right path, a conviction which is greater the less it is

perceived, and one which conquers all fear and all the reasoning of the mind. It is in vain that the intellect protests and struggles to find a better way. The bride senses the presence of the bridegroom without feeling him, for when she tries to touch him he disappears. "His right arm embraces her" (Song of Songs 2:6) and she prefers to abandon herself to his guidance, even though it seems without rhyme or reason, rather than try to reassure herself by struggling along the beaten paths of virtue. So come, my soul, come and let us go to God by self-abandonment. Let us acknowledge that we are incapable of becoming holy by our own efforts, and put our trust in God, who would not have taken away our ability to walk unless he was to carry us in his arms. What, Lord, is the use to us of being able to see, to feel and to understand, as we are not making our journey on foot but are being carried in your arms? Our trust and our faith will deepen the darker it grows; and as we pass great gorges and jagged peaks and across vast deserts, and become terrified by persecution, famine and drought and visions of hell and purgatory, we have only to glance at you to feel safe amidst the greatest peril. We shall forget the roads and what they are like, forget ourselves and abandon ourselves entirely to the wisdom, the goodness and the power of our guide, and remember only to love you and avoid the slightest sin and fulfill all our obligations. This, my Beloved, is all your children have to do. You take charge of everything else. And the more terrible this "everything" is, the more surely do they experience your presence. They think only of loving you and fulfill their little duties like a child playing in his mother's lap as if there were nothing in the world but his mother and his toys. (VI,1)

- We can only let the divine project develop, for within itself it contains both the disease and its cure. So, beloved souls, weep and tremble. Remain in torment. Make no attempt to escape from these divinely inspired terrors. Receive in the depths of your hearts the little streams which flow from the sea of sorrow which filled the most holy soul of Jesus. Keep advancing and let your tears flow under the influence of grace. This same influence will finally dry your eyes. The clouds will drift away, the sun will shine again, spring will adorn you with its flowers, and then you will see, because of your abandonment, the full extent of what the divine action is accomplishing. (VI,2)
- Do not awaken the bride. Leave her to sigh and tremble and pursue the bridegroom. It is true that he disguises himself to deceive her. But let her sleep on (Song of Songs 3:5). Her dreams and fears are born only of sleep and the night. The bridegroom will be active within this beloved soul and do to it what only he can accomplish. When the hour comes, he will awaken it. Joseph made Benjamin weep, and his servants did not reveal his secret. Joseph deceived him completely, and Benjamin and his brothers felt a bitter sorrow and saw no hope anywhere. Yet when he revealed who he was, all was put right, and they admired his wisdom in producing the greatest joy they had ever known from so much apparent misery and despair. (VI,2)
- Where God is concerned, the more we seem to lose, the more we gain; the more he strips us of natural things, the more he showers us with supernatural gifts. We certainly loved him a little for these gifts, but when we could no longer be aware of them we loved him for himself alone. He appears to take away these gifts so that he can give them the greatest gift of all, the one that is most precious because it embraces within itself all the others. (VI,3)
- God's achievement is like the front of a lovely tapestry. The worker employed on such a tapestry sees only the back as he adds stitch after stitch with his needle, yet all these stitches are slowly

creating a magnificent picture which appears in all its glory only when every stitch is done and it is viewed from the right side. But all this beauty cannot be seen as it is being created. It is the same with the self-abandoned soul. It sees only God and its duty. To fulfill this duty moment by moment consists in adding tiny stitches to the work; yet it is by these stitches that God accomplishes those marvels of which we sometimes catch a glimpse now, but which will not be truly known until the great day of eternity. How good and wise are the ways of God! All that is sublime and exalted, great and admirable in the task of achieving holiness and perfection, he has kept for his own power; but everything that is small, simple and easy he leaves us to tackle with the help of grace. So there is not a single person who cannot easily reach the highest degree of perfection by performing every duty, no matter how commonplace, with eager love. (VI,3)

- The soul which has for a very long time studied and worked to achieve perfection and used every method to co-operate with grace gradually falls into the habit of acting always by an instinctive following of God's wishes. Such a soul realizes that it can do nothing better than deal with whatever first crops up without all the careful thought it formerly used to need. It must act at random, following those promptings of grace which cannot lead it astray. And what grace does is nothing short of marvelous to those who observe it with clear eyes and intelligent minds. There are no rules, yet there is perfect organization; no proper arrangements, yet all is well ordered; no serious thinking, yet profound conclusions; no effort, yet everything done well; no foresight, yet swift adaptation to every new happening. (VI,4)
- It is of the essence of the state of self-abandonment that, although the soul thus abandoned always leads a secret life, it yet receives from God most extraordinary gifts by means of the most ordinary things and by events which seem quite natural and mere casual happenings, through occurrences which appear to be a normal part of human life. For instance, the simplest sermons, the most ordinary conversations and the most trivial books can become, through God's will, sources of knowledge and wisdom. This is why self-abandoned souls always carefully gather up the crumbs which the proud tread underfoot, for everything is precious to them and there is nothing which does not enrich them. They are completely indifferent to everything, yet neglect nothing, for they respect all things and extract from them all that is useful. As God is in all things, the use we make of them is not actually the use of creatures but the delight of obeying his will expressed through so many diverse channels. Now, these channels have no power in themselves to help us to holiness, but as instruments of the divine will they can transmit his grace and often do so to simple souls by ways and means which seem opposed to the intended end. To God, mud is as transparent as the air, and the instrument he uses is always unique for its purpose, for to him all things are alike. If our faith is strong we shall be confident that we lack nothing and shall never complain that we have not the means which might be useful for our advancement. For the Workman, who uses these means, ensures that we have all we need. His most holy will gives us everything. (VI,4)
- What can be done against the unfathomable ways of the Almighty? God takes over the cause of the simple soul, and then it has nothing to worry about, no intrigues to fear, no need to keep a careful watch on other people. It is carefree and rests in the bridegroom's arms safe and at peace. God frees us from all the ignoble and devious tricks which seem necessary to human prudence. Such tricks suited Herod and the Pharisees, but all the Magi had to do was follow their star in peace, and the Child had only to rest in his mother's arms. His enemies benefited rather than harmed him, and

the more they tried to thwart and trap him, the more freely and calmly did he act. He never humored them nor did he ever flatter them to escape their blows, their envy and their suspicion. Their persecution was necessary for him. That is how Jesus Christ lived in Judea, and this is how he continues to live in simple souls. With them he is generous and gentle, unreserved and friendly. He neither fears nor needs anyone, for he sees all creatures in his Father's hands and knows they are bound to serve him. Some give this service by their evil passions, some by their holy deeds, others by their glad obedience. It is all wonderfully arranged: nothing is lacking, nor is there too much of anything. There is just what there should be of both good and evil. At every moment God's will produces what is needful for the task in hand, and the simple soul, instructed by faith, finds everything as it should be and wants neither more nor less than what it has. It never ceases to praise the divine hand for the way it smoothes the path ahead. It receives both friends and enemies with the same kindness, just as Jesus treated everyone as God's agent. We have need of no one, yet we need everybody. God wills that everything and everyone are necessary and we must accept them from him just as they are, receiving them kindly and humbly. (VI,5)

- I am more afraid of what I and my friends do than anything done by my enemies. There is nothing more prudent than to offer no resistance to one's enemies and face them in simple self-abandonment. This is to run before the wind and stay at peace. Simplicity is always victorious when faced with worldly wisdom and easily avoids all its tricks without understanding them or even being conscious of them. God makes the soul take such suitable measures that they completely confound those who seek to trap it. It benefits by all their efforts, and what is meant to degrade it only increases its virtue. Their stratagems bring it into its harbor like galley slaves rowing all out. All obstacles help it so much that, by giving its enemies a free hand, it gets from them such ample and continuous advantages that it must beware that it does not join in and take part in work which God wishes to do himself with these enemies as his agent. All the soul has to do is observe peacefully the activities of God and, in all simplicity, follow those inspirations which come from the Holy Spirit, who always knows the true significance of everything and directs the soul, without its knowledge, so suitably that all who are its enemies are inevitably destroyed. (VI,6)
- The huge, unyielding rock that shelters the soul from all storms is the divine will, which is always there, though hidden beneath the veil of trials and the most commonplace actions. Deep within those shadows is the hand of God to support and carry us to complete self-abandonment. And when a soul has arrived at this sublime state it need fear nothing which is said against it, for there is no longer anything for it to say or do in self-defense. Since it is the work of God, we must not try to justify it. Its effects and its consequences will vindicate it enough. There is nothing to be done but let them unfold. If we no longer rely on our own ideas, we must not try to defend ourselves with words, for words can only express our ideas. So, no ideas, no words. What use would they be? To give reasons for our behavior? But we do not know these reasons, for they are hidden in the source of our actions, and from that source we have received only influences we can neither describe nor understand. So we must let the consequences justify themselves. Every link in this divine chain is unbreakable, and the meaning of what has happened earlier is seen in the consequences which follow. The soul no longer lives in a world of thoughts, of imagination, of endless words. Now these no longer occupy it; neither do they nourish or sustain it. It no longer sees where it is going or where it will go. It relies no longer on its own ideas to help it to bear the weariness and difficulties of the journey. It carries on with a profound conviction of its own

weakness. But with each step the road widens and, having started, the soul advances along it without hesitation. It is innocent, simple and faithful and follows the straight path of God's commandments, relying on him, whom it meets continually along this path. (VI,7)

- There is a time when God desires to animate the whole of the soul and bring it to perfection secretly and by unknown ways. It is then that a soul's own ideas, intuitions, work, investigations and inferences become sources of delusion. After several experiences of the folly into which it is led by its efforts to guide itself, the soul recognizes how helpless it is and discovers that God has so hidden and entangled all the channels through which his love flows that it has to find life in God himself. So, convinced of its own nothingness and certain, too, that all it can derive from itself is harmful, it abandons itself to God so that it can have only him and receive all things through him. It is then that God becomes the source of its life, not because of anything it has thought about, or through any illumination, for all this is no longer anything but a source of illusion. The soul's new attitude comes about through the reality and the efforts of God's grace, hidden and disguised though it is. The soul knows nothing of God's operations, yet it receives from them all their efficacy through countless events which it believes will destroy it. There is nothing we can do about this ignorance. We must just put up with it. But it is within this ignorance that God gives himself and all other things. The soul is blind or like a sick person who finds all his medicines unpleasant but never realizes the good they are doing him. He often thinks they will kill him. And the weakness and various relapses which follow his taking of them seem to justify his fears. But, although he appears to be near death, he regains his health because he takes the medicine on his doctor's word. (VI,8)
- We should try always to carry ourselves with the air of a child blessed by God's grace and his good will. What on earth have we to fear if we follow him? As his children, led and upheld by him, our whole attitude should be one of fearlessness. The terrors we meet on our journey are really nothing. They are sent only so that our lives may be made more splendid by our overcoming them. God involves us in every kind of trouble, and ordinary human common sense, seeing no way out of it, realizes all its weakness and shortcomings and feels completely baffled. It is at this moment that God appears in all his glory to those who belong wholly to him and disentangles them from all their troubles far more easily than novelists, working away in the peace of their rooms, extricate their heroes from all their dangers and bring them to a happy and successful end. With far greater skill and most happily does God lead them through deadly perils, monstrous happenings, through hell itself and its demons and all their snares. He sweeps these souls up to heaven and transforms them into the heroes of stories far stranger and more lovely than any invented by the stunted imaginings of men. So, my soul, plunge ahead, sweeping through all the monster-plagued dangers ahead, knowing that you are guided and sustained by the mighty, yet invisible, hand of God. Let us carry on to the end without the slightest tremor of fear, but full of peace and joy, with everything that befalls us becoming the occasion for fresh triumphs. We march under God's banner to fight and to conquer: "He went from victory to victory" (Rev. 6:2). Every step we take under his command is a victory. God has his pen and an open book before him, and in this book he writes a blessed story which will end only when the world ends, for it is an account of God's dealings with men and women. If we want to have a place in this story, we must ensure that we link all we do and suffer with God's will. I most solemnly assure you that all your actions and sufferings are not meant to destroy you. They serve to help to fill this holy book of God, which grows every day. (VI,8)

- God troubles about nothing but our good will. He is quite unconcerned about any other of our qualities or lack of them. All he wants from us is an honest, straightforward, simple, submissive and loyal heart. (VI,9)
- For those who abandon themselves to it, God's love contains every good thing, and if you long for it with all your heart and soul it will be yours. All God asks for is love, and if you search for this kingdom where God alone rules, you can be quite sure you will find it. For if your heart is completely devoted to God, your heart itself is this treasure, this very kingdom which you desire so ardently. (VI,9)
- What use to us is the most profound insight and even revelations coming direct from God, if we do not love his will? When God disclosed to Lucifer the mystery of the Incarnation, jealousy consumed him. Yet a simple soul enlightened only by faith never tires of admiring, praising and loving every manifestation of God's will. It finds it shown not only in saints but even in complete chaos and disorder. One grain of pure faith gives more true enlightenment to a simple soul than Lucifer ever gained by his vastly superior intelligence. A simple soul, faithfully fulfilling its duties, contentedly obedient to the suggestions of grace and being gentle and humble to everyone, possesses knowledge worth more than the most profound intellectual penetration of the unknown. If only we could see the divine activity in all the pride and savagery of human activity, we should always behave toward our fellow creatures with kindness and respect. For their turbulence would never affect us. We must never sever our union with the activity of God which is incorporated in them and which they will reveal to us if we stay gentle and humble. We must take no notice of the path they tread, but advance steadfastly along our own. By such gentle resolutions, great cedars are broken and mountains moved. For who can resist the strength of a faithful, gentle and humble soul? These qualities are all the weapons we need to overcome all our enemies. Jesus Christ has placed them in our hands so we can defend ourselves. Once we know how to use them, we need fear nothing. We must not be cowardly, but act with a noble courage, and then we shall be able to use these God-given weapons. (VI,10)
- The whole principle on which the simple soul bases its life is to do God's will, and he respects its working even in the wicked deeds which the arrogant man commits to affront it. Such a man despises a humble soul, in whose eyes he is a mere cipher, for it sees only God in his person and his deeds. The man of pride often imagines that the unassuming modesty of the simple soul is a sign that it fears him, although it is merely the sign of the loving fear of God and his will, as shown to it by this haughty fellow. No, poor fool, the simple soul has no fear of you. You fill it with pity. It is answering God when you think it is talking to you. It knows it is dealing with God and considers you only as one of his slaves or rather as a shadow which disguises him. The haughtier the tone you take, the more softly does it answer you, and when you think to take it by surprise, you are the one who will be startled. For it, all your cheating and violence come as favors from heaven. A proud soul is a riddle which a simple soul enlightened by faith solves very easily. The realization that God is active in all that happens at every moment is the deepest knowledge we can have in this life of the things of God. It is a continuous revelation, an endlessly renewed traffic with God; the bridegroom is enjoyed without any stealth or secrecy, not in the wine cellar or the vineyard but openly and freely and fearing no one. It is peace, joy, love and a feeling of being at ease with God who is seen and known---or, rather, believed---to be present and always active in the most faultless

way in every happening. It is a foretaste of paradise, which is, in this life, only sensed imperfectly through a veil of shadows, but when it comes to the moment of our death, the Holy Spirit, who secretly moves all the pieces on the board of life by his continual and fruitful activity, will say: "Let there be light." Then we shall behold all the riches which faith alone knew were hidden in those depths of peace and contentment with God, who is with us all the time and by our side in all we do and suffer. (VI,11)

- Since the world began, its history is nothing but the account of the campaign waged by the powers of the world and the princes of hell against the humble souls who love God. It is a conflict in which all the odds seem to favor pride, yet humility always wins. The image of this world is shown to us as a statue of gold, silver, bronze, iron and earthenware. This mystery of evil, which Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream (Dan. 2:24), is nothing but a jumble of all the physical and spiritual activities of the children of darkness, together with the beast coming out of the abyss to war against the interior and spiritual life of man. It is a war that has been going on since time began, and everything that happens in the contemporary world is the continuation of this war (Rev. 13:1-ff). Monster follows monster and the abyss engulfs them and spews them forth again amidst incessant clouds of smoke. The war, which broke out in heaven between St. Michael and Lucifer, is still being fought. The heart of this proud and jealous angel is a bottomless pit from which all wickedness comes. He began civil war between the angels of heaven, and since the creation of the world his sole aim has been to enroll regiments of scoundrels, wicked men, to fill the ranks of those he has swallowed up. Lucifer is the chief of those who defy God. This mystery of evil turns upside down the good order of God, replacing it with the order---or, rather disorder---of the devil..Every wicked man since Cain...are beasts who have filed out from the pit to overthrow the order of God. But this order---another mystery---has never failed to produce great and powerful men who have slain these monsters, and as new ones are vomited forth from hell, heaven has created new heroes to destroy them. All ancient history, both sacred and profane, is only the record of this conflict. The order established by God has always conquered, and those who have fought with him enjoy eternal happiness. Deserters from his ranks receive eternal death as their reward. The wicked man is always certain that he is invincible. But, O God, how can we withstand you? If one solitary soul has all the powers of hell and the world against it, it need fear nothing if it has abandoned itself to the order of God...All these monsters come into the world only to stimulate the courage of the children of God, and when they have finished their training, God allows them to slay the monster. Heaven receives the victors and hell engulfs the vanquished. A new monster appears and God summons fresh warriors into the arena. Our life here is a spectacle which makes heaven rejoice, rears up saints and confounds hell. And so all that opposes the rule of God only succeeds in making it more worthy of being adored. All the enemies of justice become its slaves, and God builds the heavenly Jerusalem with the fragments of Babylon the destroyed. (VI,12)