

# ***The Way of the Nun***

## ***The Life of St. Theresa of Avila***

### ***Lesson 9 of the Kabalistic Series***

***by***  
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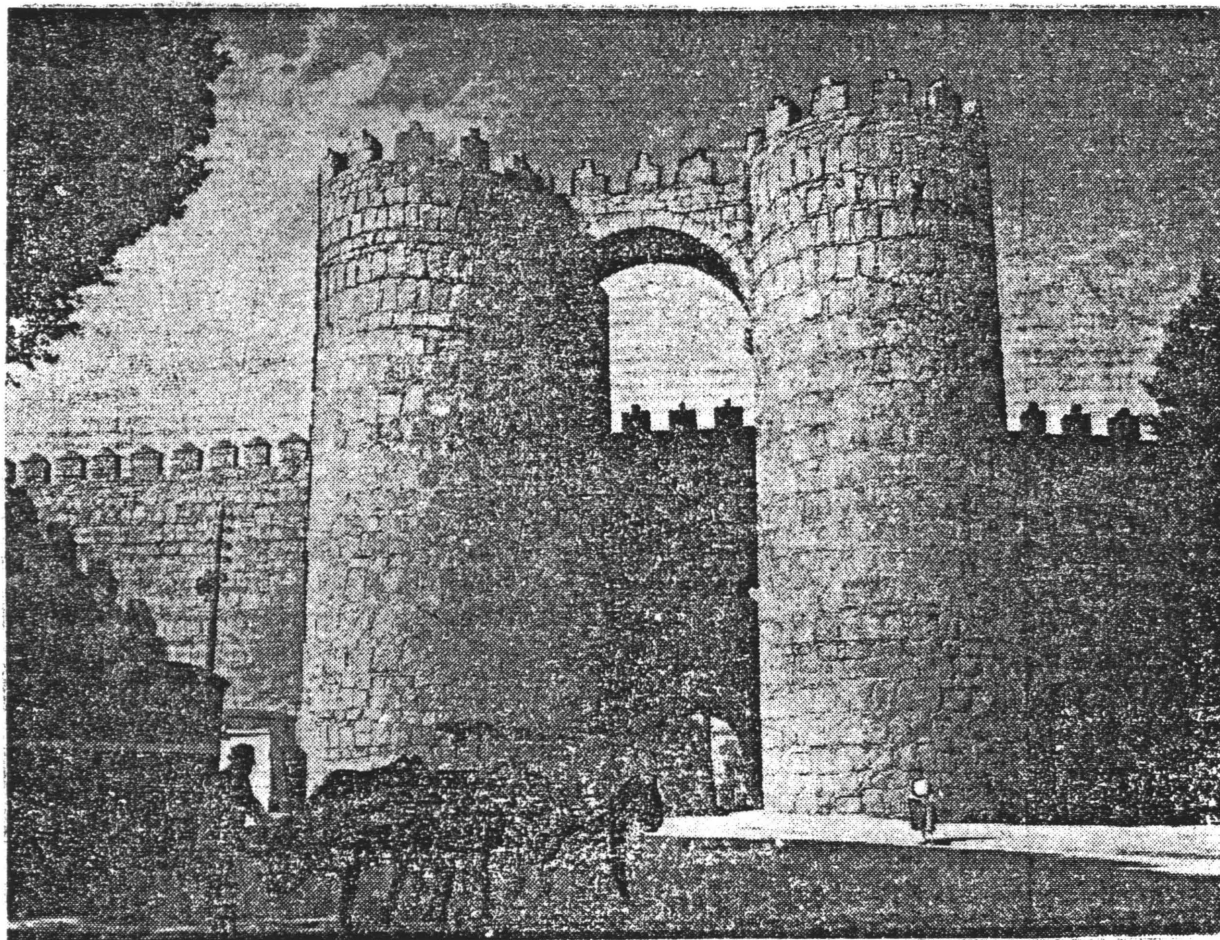
## THE LIFE OF ST. THERESA -- A HERMETIC REVIEW

Lesson Nine in a series on "The Invisible Reality Behind Appearances" by Judy and Riley Crabb, taken from J.M. Cohen's translation of "The Life Of St. Theresa", a Penguin Classic, 1957. This is a Cabalist view of the Second of the Four Ways, the Way of the Monk or the Nun, devotional mysticism.

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Illustrations by R. and K. Wood  
from "The Catholic Picture Dictionary"



The battlements of Avila. Outside these walls Theresa took the Habit and also established her first Convent.

## THE LIFE OF ST. THERESA

By Judy and Riley Crabb

This most famous Mystic of the Western World was born at Avila, Spain, March 28, 1515, a child of Aries. In Zolar's "It's All In The Stars" we learn first of the qualities which foreshadow her destiny as a leader in religious mysticism:

"You possess the qualities of an orator. You can be cutting and sarcastic in your manner of speech. A fondness for mysteries is indicated, along with a love of argument and debate. These qualities add greatly to your store of knowledge and can be prime factors in the development of your mental faculties, and social background. While you may be affectionate and magnanimous to your immediate family, you show a tendency to be somewhat inconsiderate toward others. You can be turbulent and vengeful where outsiders are concerned."

That we are dealing with a powerful personality in Theresa is indicated by the fact that she was born in the First Decanate of Aries. This gave her a double configuration of the warlike planet, Mars! Zolar reminds the First Decanate natives: "Mars will bring out the more dominant and dictatorial and positive side of your nature. There is a tendency to become impatient and irritable with others because they do not have the ability to think and act as quickly as you do." This characteristic becomes increasingly clear as we move along through her autobiography. "It is highly important to practice tolerance, patience, and understanding. An active body and an impetuous, spirited nature is shown by the double aspect of Mars in your chart. . . Your personality will always be aggressive, independent, temperamental and persevering. . . While you may have many original ideas, you prefer to have others execute them for you. Your best results will be obtained when you are permitted to assume leadership."

In retrospect it is easy to see that Theresa exhibited all of the above characteristics in a long, turbulently successful career which saw her ultimately becoming the head of a religious order which she founded! This in spite of her lifelong desire to desert the world for her Interior Castle, and let the world founder in the cesspool of its own vices.

It is important to note that Theresa was one quarter Jewess; thus to the double Mars quality we add the natural organizing genius of the Jewish race. Is it any wonder that the be-

came a controversial figure in her field, a leader full of radical, reform ideas?

### THE INTERIOR CASTLE OF THE SOUL

Does Astrology give us any indication of the quality of Theresa's soul? For this delicately invisible matter we turn to the tables of Sabian Symbols, and 9° of Aries: "A Seer gazes with concentration into a crystal sphere. Direction from within. Taking advantage of all factors in a given situation, and knowing when to make decisions. Assurance."

The soul choice of the Path of the Mystic was obvious from Theresa's early interest in the lives of the Roman Catholic saints. She and her brother used to read them together. She longed to die like them, martyrdom suffered for the love of God. She felt so strongly that the saints "bought His presence very cheaply" through their ordeals. In play with other girls she delighted in playing the part of a nun. The idea of escaping the world with its harsh realities was with her from her earliest years.

It was natural that she should attend the convent school outside Avila. It was probably the only public education available to the common people, church school. Puberty came, and with it the beginning of the lifelong struggle to bring the generative forces under control and to sublimate them completely. This manifested in the typical hysteria and ill health of the strongly sexed, would-be celibate. For over a year she was afraid to try to take the Veil, but finally did so at the age of 21. This was in the Convent of the Incarnation outside the walls of Avila, Nov. 3, 1536. Those mediaeval bastions are still standing, by the way, in a state of good repair.

Of this momentous event in her life she writes: "The Lord immediately showed me how He favors those who do violence to themselves in order to serve Him."

She felt a great joy in the life of the Cloister. This never failed her and she took a great delight in all details of the religious life. One major reason was that it freed her from the "details and vanities" of earthly life. The Cloister was a refuge from the temptations of the world. But, her health was even more adversely affected. She began to faint frequently. She had pains in her heart. Female complaints and ailments were her daily lot. At times she was only semi-conscious. Finally, her father had to take her from the convent and send her to another town for a cure. Marriage and a normal love life would have relieved the severe internal pressures of the damned-up sex energies; but this was not the soul's choice of path for this life; so the suffer-

ing and unbelievable agony continued for 20 years!

It was an endless war between the flesh and the spirit and obviously the doctors in the nearby town could not cure her ills, even if their methods had been based on sound physical therapy. Actually, she says that their attempted cures caused her greater physical suffering than the original illness! So she was returned to the convent at Avila still carrying her self-chosen Cross, after three months of remedies.

### LEARNING CONCENTRATION

At this time an uncle gave her a book on Prayers of Recollection, "The Third Alphabet", by the Franciscan, Francisco de Osuna. This started her on the right way to pray and to "recollect herself" as she put it, in solitude. For lay people, as well as for monks and nuns, the Church has developed the technique of the Stations of the Cross as a formal prayer ritual which helps to keep the mind concentrated on holiness.

Nine months of solitude in the quest for inner Light achieved results for which she had no preparation nor understanding. The Lord raised her to Paths of Quiet, and occasionally to Union with Him. During these times she seemed to see the world far, far below her. She had no way of knowing how long these first ecstasies lasted.

She was carving out a lonely path in consciousness with no help or guidance from her confessors. They didn't understand what was happening to her either. This is one of the constant complaints in her biography, the scarcity of competent confessors.

Her method of concentration was to try to create a strong image of Jesus Christ in her heart, and then to have that image go through incidents from His life from the New Testament. The Church calls this The Passion. There was no one to teach her this method. She had to work it out in spite of what she called her mental limitations "no talent for intellectual meditation nor use of the imagination" but came to realize this was a blessing, this poverty of the mind. Uncluttered, there was little to stand in the way of her desire for Union, except that poor body and its violent reactions to the constant in-pouring of spiritual power.

Her respect for mental power and for learning in others was great, however; for she never ventured to pray without a book in her hands, for 18 years, except after taking Communion. This attraction to learning made her critical of "half-educated confessors" confessors who had done her soul great harm in



not being able to understand her spiritual experiences. She thought it was better that they had no learning at all, just so long as they were virtuous.

Her first confessor was far, far from being that! Theresa discovered to her horror that this priest was having an affair with a woman of Avila! But in spite of living in sin he continued to say Mass and to hear confessions of other sinners. Beyond that he developed a fondness for Theresa --

as though she wasn't already having enough trouble with her rising generative energies. But she continued the heroic struggle to keep them under control. Her sex was reserved for union with the Lord, a vertical marriage, between Lower Self and Higher Self.

Her priestly confessor preferred the horizontal kind, and made the young nun his confessor. He showed her a copper talisman he was wearing, a gift from his mistress. Theresa sensed that this was a highly charged talisman, the focal point of a Black Magickal spell. Through this the woman kept her hold on the priest.

Theresa finally persuaded the priest to give up the copper image and had one of her friends toss it in the nearby river. This broke the hypnotic spell laid upon him by the seductress and he awoke "as one from a long sleep" and was amazed at his tragic state. According to Theresa he had nothing but loathing for the former goddess of the bedroom and praised God for restoring his sight. But this sudden reversal of the course of the direction of his life was too much for his physical organism and he died within a year.

The young saint-to-be was almost dead herself from the struggle to contain her life-forces and keep them from rending and tearing her organism apart. Some mediaeval artist and alchemist portrayed this so well in the illustration above, with the sex energies twining about the prone physical form. Their use and abuse can send a man or woman to a premature

grave, wracked with disease; or the generative energies can be used to create an immortal Solar Body or Body of Light, the only way a human being can get out of the world alive! This Life-force is often portrayed as a writhing serpent or dragon. Probably the major goal of a human in physical incarnation is to bring it under control and use it for constructive purposes.

It was to be Theresa's constant battle until she was over 40 and the barbaric medical practices of the day only added to her agony. One "treatment" put her in shock for four days. Her sister nuns feared for her life. She was given extreme unction. A grave was prepared for her in the grounds of the convent.

She was conscious in her agony but could move neither hand nor foot, the pain so great she chewed her tongue to pieces. The Path of the Mystic may be shortest. It is also the roughest!

The Last Rites and the freshly dug grave were premature by over 40 years. Theresa went through a death and re-birth, all right, but all while still in the body. She was nothing but bones and almost totally paralyzed for eight months. Gestation? And it was another three years before she could even crawl about on her hands and knees. The Sisters were amazed and tremendously impressed by her patience and long suffering. During this time she learned to avoid all gossip and to refrain from making unkind or critical remarks. Already this Avilan was establishing high standards of behavior for Sisters, an outstanding example of self-less devotion to the Christ which was to endure for hundreds of years.

#### THE PHYSICIAN OF HEAVEN

One result of this terrible illness, and the terrible things done to her by the local doctors, was to destroy her dependence on ordinary mortals for health. She gave up doctors and their worldly medicines and invoked the Physician of Heaven to cure her. She commended herself to St. Joseph, and yearned for a fully enclosed convent where the inhabitants were fully committed to the contemplative life, free from the temptation to yield to the earthy expression of the surging Life-force within her. In the prime of her young womanhood she saw these normal, unpolarized longings for union with the opposite sex as the road to hell.

The Convent of the Incarnation was not enclosed. There was daily traffic with the outside world. To Theresa this made it "a place of great peril". Is this an oblique admission on her part that she was well aware of hanky-panky be-



tween priests and nuns? Of course! Not for nothing had Martin Luther made his accusations of priestly transgressions only two years after Theresa's birth.

But Theresa preferred to spend her life of reform within the Church, a goal beyond the powers of any one man or woman; she only succeeded in reforming herself. Her practical solution to the sexual problems of her sister nuns was that if the devout life were impossible to them "it would be better for them to make humble marriages".

### "SO MANY EVILS IN THE CHURCH"

"What terrible harm befalls religious men and women where the rules are not properly kept. . . friars and nuns who begin to follow their true calling have more to fear from members of their own communities than from all the devils. . . I do know why we are surprised there are so many evils in the Church, when these, who should be models from whom all derive virtue, so nullify the work. . ."

One of her first visions of the Christ came as a warning about the evil ways of a sister nun. She writes that He appeared most severe and more clear to the eyes of the soul than to physical sight.

At that time she didn't know that there was any sight other than physical; so the experience was very disturbing; so much so that she was afraid to tell her confessor about it; and that was disturbing too!

So her spiritual education continued over the years, vision following vision, revelation following revelation, as the boundless life of spirit unfolded within her. The secret courtship of the Christ was a major part of that unfoldment. Or was it a passionate love affair? She suffered morning sickness for over 20 years. Her stomach refused to accept and hold any food before noon! And she always had the aches and pains of love around her heart.

Theresa longed to be free of the tomb of the flesh and to lose herself completely in the vast love of her Lord and Master. The demands of her body forced her to give some of her time and attention to the physical world, to be practical. The physical material and energy she had borrowed from her parents in birth and growth to young womanhood had to be paid back in service to the race. There was no escaping that obligation to the world until it was fulfilled.

The mystical bent of previous lives had led her to neglect mental development. Oriental mystics are fond of saying that "the mind is the slayer of the real", but Theresa

found that she had great difficulty in keeping her mind on the subject of her prayer because of lack of mental control! Thus the need to feel a printed book in her lap, between her hands, for support.

### NEED FOR COMPANIONSHIP

In spite of her drive for escape from the world, for enclosed convents and the contemplative life, Theresa was forced to recognize the need for companionship of like-minded people. She needed her sister nuns for moral support. There were far more people to criticize her for wasting her life in a cloister than to encourage her in it. She needed encouragement in the practice of prayer, not discouragement; for it seemed there were many to encourage her to fail or fall; but when it came to picking herself up, she was alone. The saints and sages who fled to the solitudes of the desert were alone, too; but at least they had no one to hinder them in their devotions.

One of the greatest of her early battles was the pernicious dogma of sin and unworthiness. This weighed so heavily upon her that she even gave up prayer for a time, feeling herself even unworthy to ask for Light. She blamed this on the devil, of course, not realising that devil was the priesthood of her Church. Her admonition to all beginners is that prayer should not be given up, regardless of how sinful a person is, once he or she has started it as a part of their spiritual life and growth.

"Mental prayer is friendly intercourse and conversation with Him who loves us."

Nevertheless, she found that the times of regular prayer were sometimes a disagreeable chore for her and she became aware that she was concentrating on the end of the oratory, of getting it over with, rather than on the intention or object of the prayer itself.

### THE CALL OF THE FLESH

Theresa was so hungry for normal male companionship that listening to the sermons of the priests became a torment for her. Consciously she writes that she did not know "how this came about". But subconsciously her affections were aroused toward the most prominent men in her life, the ones who performed the Celebration of the Eucharist at her convent.

The only safe and proper answer to this, of course, was to supplant the image of the priest in her yearning heart with the image of the Christ. She couldn't meditate intellectually

but she could at least form a strong image of the Christ in her heart, to dwell upon. The image of His agony in the Garden appealed to her especially, probably because of her own physical suffering. And of course this is the image emphasized by the Church and its priests.

She was distressed because her mind couldn't call up heavenly thoughts on command. She had to wait until the Lord presented them to her! But her continued reading of the lives of the Saints furnished some mental food, or images -- "furniture" for the mind, we might call it. One of the more significant of these books for her was St. Augustine's Confessions. When she got to the reading of his story of hearing the Voice in the garden, it seemed that the Lord spoke to her, too.

### THE SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE CONSUMMATED

Her inward picturing of the Christ finally brought its reward. There was the overwhelming feeling of His actual presence. She was engulfed in it, absorbed, wholly enraptured. If she had only known it, this was an orgasm of the heart and mind, rather than of the physical sexual organs. She had won one of the first big battles on the Path, that aspect of emotional control we call sublimation of the sexual or creative energies.

Theresa's description of these experiences to her confessor finally moved him to urge her to write them down so they could be shared with others. To her this was another burden added to the many she already carried. In the first place, writing did not come easily to her. In the second place, she was pure and simple a Mystic to whom her subjective, inner life was preeminent, and to have to objectify these precious, private visions and ecstasies was almost a sacrilege. The writing helped to chain her to the physical world from which she wanted to escape, in addition to exposing her to the crucifixion of public ridicule and scorn.

Besides all this, the Convent of the Incarnation was a poor house. The nuns had to work hard to keep it going. One of her main occupations was spinning. This was another of those chores which forced her to keep her attention on and in the physical world, for part of the time at least. As for her writings, she charged her Superior with responsibility for them, that they be consistent "with the truths of our holy Catholic Church". Just how truthful those "truths" were she found out through bitter experience as the years wore on, and the tales of her Mystical experiences made the rounds of the Cloisters.

## THE SAMPLE AND EXAMPLE

The writings of her Mystical experiences were an inspiration to others, until they learned of horrible physical conditions, with her morning sickness, prostrations, hysteria, paralysis, etc. She came to realize that she had been a poor saleswoman of prayer and its effectiveness in her earlier years. Her own condition was certainly no encouragement to others to follow her Path.



The solution to the health problem, for her, came only when she gave up thinking of her own ease and comfort. She had been frightened by her own thoughts. This negative mental condition she attributed to the devil.

In her pride of learning and reading the abstractions of others -- also the instructions of her confessors -- she thought she understood prayer -- until experience taught her otherwise. In humility she confesses that there are many roads to the heavenly mansions and each must find his or her own way.

Her way was an overwhelming vision of the Christ in all His manly beauty. By this perfect standard of course all other males suffered by comparison. None of those in her life there in Avila seemed handsome or attractive to her. From that time forward, this freed her of the need for male companionship. Her Jesuit confessors were always afraid that she might form an attachment for them, but in the security of her vertical marriage with the Christ she could laugh at them and their concern that she should have any personal feelings for them. She obeyed them in everything they suggested or commanded but in the light of her own ripening understanding their rigidly circumscribed dogma proved irksome.

For she found that she could converse with the Lord about anything, but this was only after she had overcome her first awe and terror of Him. Then she oscillated emotionally to the other extreme, that she would lose His companionship in some way by offending Him. The Light of His presence had become the only relief in an otherwise drab and dull life. One time she was a week without that Light, and found no spark within herself by which she could relight that Fire and bring it back.

Another time she was so ill she excused herself from mental prayer and picked up her rosary to begin a vocal recitation. A violent rapture seized her and raised her consciousness to heaven. There in vision she saw her father and

mother. She was so afraid this might be an illusion that she didn't tell her Confessor for fear of being ridiculed!

### LOST FOR WORDS

Theresa found the Light of her visions to be inexpressible. It was totally unlike the light here on earth. She found that her imagination was incapable of creating a description of this Light. The joy is so sublime as to be indescribable, as are the bliss and the sweetness.

The result of these visions was a really natural detachment from the cares of worldly life without any effort on her part. All fear of death is gone forever, of course; for she knew beyond any doubt that her soul had left its body for its true home in heaven.

Death, she came to realize from these experiences -- true death -- is birth in the physical body! We here in the flesh are all but pilgrims in a death-like state. The companions of the spirit life are the only ones who are truly awake, alive, and no earthly mortal could possibly be a companion in the rapture state.

The physical life is the dream; the soul life is the reality.

One of her more memorable visions was of a dove above her head. This one came to her after she had returned to her cell, from Pentecostal Mass, to pray and to meditate on her sins. The physical presence of the Host was radiating from her solar plexus area. This talisman of the Christ enabled a great wave of energy to sweep over her. It was staggering in its impact. Then the hovering dove of peace, with wings made of little brilliant shells. The rapture from this sudden expansion of consciousness lasted for days.

Visions like these made her keenly aware of the human rebellions within her, made her aware that while she was directing her harshest blows at the Christ, He was sustaining her with His favors. Sometimes her deepest humiliations preceded her highest raptures.

In her ignorance of occult law Theresa didn't know that teachers have a way of using this law of action and reaction to get the necessary oscillation for lifting their pupils in metaphysics to the heights. You can find another dramatic example of this in Ouspensky's "In Search Of The Miraculous". There his teacher, Gurdjieff, deliberately embarrasses and enrages him in front of others of the class; then takes ad-

vantage of this tremendous emotional charge in Ouspensky to direct it to the opening of his inner hearing and sight.

### THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

This awakened sensitivity led Theresa to a tremendous vision of the Lord "in his Sacred Humanity". He was more glorious than she have ever seen Him before, in the bosom of His Father. It took her days to recover from that one. It was the most sublime vision she had ever seen. She was to have three more of these before she ended the writing of her autobiography.

"It is a great flame that burns up all worldly desires," she wrote, "Instilling a deep reverence different from anything on earth."



The next time she took Communion the memory of this vision made her hair stand on end. For the first time she fully realized that He was in the most Sacred Sacrament.

The Power, Wisdom and Love of the Christ are concentrated in the Host when the priest chants the Prayer of Consecration and makes the Signs of the Cross (+) over it.

"Wherefore, O most merciful Father, we thy suppliants do pray and beseech Thee, through Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord, to receive and bless these + + gifts and + offerings, this + holy and unblemished sacrifice."

That this Power comes through into the physical symbol of the Lord regardless of the comparative purity of the officiating priest was shown very dramatically to Theresa. She once saw two most hideous devils accompanying the priest at the altar. She was about to take Communion herself. Their horns were around the throat of the Celebrant. He was living in mortal sin.

Yes she could see and feel that the Lord was in the Host in all His majesty. If she hadn't been fully aware of this she wouldn't have been able to receive Communion that day, from the shock of seeing those devils, elementals. How terrible to see His beauty between two such hideous shapes. The elementals were cowed and alarmed in His presence; otherwise, Theresa would have fled the place.

Later, when Christ appeared to her for one of her instruction sessions, He told her that He allowed her to see this so she would realize the power in the words of Consecration spoken or chanted by the Celebrant.

"God never fails to be present, however wicked the priest who pronounces them."

#### IN THE SERVICE OF THE LORD

She prayed for a month that one sinful churchman be turned from his evil ways. Then she had a vision of the devil beside her, angrily tearing up some papers. She took this as an indication that her prayers had gotten results. Later she heard that the man had made a contrite confession of his wrong-doing.

Lest she become too proud of her ability to change people through prayer, the Lord saw to it that some of them were not answered. This astonished her, until she humbly realized that some prayers were "unsuitable to the Lord". One sure indication of this to her was the inability to concentrate on the subject of that prayer. There was no spirituality or strength coursing through her.

This did not lessen the realization of the all-encompassing presence of God. One great vision was of how "all things are seen in God, and how He contains all things within Him". She wrote that this vision came in such a delicate way that "the intellect could not touch it". There were no words to describe it.

She had many visions in which she saw the faithful Roman Catholics fighting valiantly to defend the Church against heretics. Apparently it never occurred to this religious fanatic that some people would be moved to try to reform the Church from outside even as she was trying to reform it from inside!

A fellow-fanatic, Dominic de Guzman, appeared to her from the Astral world and showed her an open book. In it she read: "In times to come this Order will flourish and have many martyrs." He should have added that his Order would make many martyrs out of heretics, to the great shame of those who claim to speak for the Prince of Peace.

Theresa's own self-chosen path of suffering and martyrdom continued. She wanted freedom from the flesh so she could indulge the endless ecstasies of the Higher Consciousness, but to her distress, the demands of her sick body forced her to keep her attention on and in the physical world. It took a

vision of the Lord to comfort her and assure her that this present life was necessary, very much so; and He asked her to endure her illnesses and tribulations for sake of Him. This instruction relieved her distress and showed her also how He had placed Himself, so to speak, in the hands of his enemies for the good of Theresa and of all men and women.

This placed a greater obligation on monks and nuns to be good than it did on other men and women.

#### ONE COMPLETELY DAMNED

A shocking revelation came to her as a dead man was being laid in his shroud. She had known him in physical life, and that he was evil, but not quite this bad! The devils were tossing his astral body with great hooks, playing with it. The seeing of this nearly drove her out of her mind. The honor and ceremony of the funeral service drove them away for a time, but when the physical body was laid in the grave the devils swarmed around it again. This caused her so much agitation she was afraid she couldn't conceal it, and led her to hope that others could see what she saw, especially the wrong-doers.

In another instance she offered herself and all the good that she had done as a sacrifice which would free her Provincial from purgatory -- presumably when he died. He wasn't completely damned. In her dealings with him she came to realize he had not discharged his responsibilities for the many souls under his care -- at least not in as holy a manner as she expected.

Here is another example of the many given by this religious reformer, trying in vain to lift the Church out of that state of corruption which had brought on the Reformation. In the end, the main result of her efforts was to lift herself. Individuals cannot change the pace of evolution very much.



## THE FOUR WATERS OF PRAYER

Experience taught Theresa that there are four definitely recognizable states of prayer. These she compared to the watering of a garden; so they have often been called The Four Waters of Prayer; and she describes them thus:

1. Drawn up by hand in buckets.
2. By water-wheel or windlass.
3. By a stream or spring.
4. By rain, from the Lord Himself.

Of course the Fourth Way is best of all.

Beginners in prayer "draw water" with great labor because of the many distractions within and without. Theresa's ill-health was one distraction which she endured for many, many years. She pleads with the beginner to persist with great resolution, but warns him or her not to care about consolations, "neither rejoicing when the Lord gives them, nor being discouraged when He withholds them".

Nor should the beginner be afraid of the Cross, but rather advance joyfully to it and shoulder it; "for the Lord will help him carry it".

The speedy way of advancement is to picture one's self in the presence of the Christ, feeling constantly the Lord's great love for humanity. And of course, for the devout Roman Catholic, the incidents of what they call the Passion are highly recommended, the Stations of the Cross, where the emphasis is on suffering and martyrdom. These scenes do not raise the mind, as Theresa so wisely points out. The Passion is not designed to help the mind consider the high things of heaven, but rather to purify the lower nature in the fires of suffering. Anyhow, as Theresa writes, she wasn't capable of considering the high things of heaven; and she didn't believe any one else was capable of it either! She advises her readers not to try to rise in consciousness if the Lord does not raise them.



This is a rule which aspirants must learn from experience; for they cannot presume to

suspend their understanding themselves. They must wait for God to do it, to put them in trance and give a flash of understanding "in the twinkling of an eye".

#### WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO PRAY?

Theresa learned that discretion and good judgment are necessary in everything, including the practice of prayer! Intense devotion must be alternated with periods of relaxation "so that we may return to our prayers invigorated". Of course one must desire to reach the high state of the saints and put that desire into effect -- with true humility, which must always be present.

But "walking in righteousness and clinging to virtue" will advance the student or aspirant only at a snail's pace! She found that these phony religious "virtues" didn't give her the kind of spiritual freedom she wanted. "I don't need rest. I want the Cross!" But this she learned only after years of struggling with that sick body.

And also struggling with the inadequacies of the priests appointed to be her teachers! Oh, how the beginner in prayer requires an intelligent director. She met so many nuns who were tormented by the inexperience of their masters. She is constantly bemoaning this fact of their inexperience in her autobiography, inexperienced directors and inexperienced confessors -- whom the nun must obey without question.

She spoke of a sister nun who was held in the bondage of self-examination for eight years by an inexperienced confessor; yet she was already achieving the Prayer of Quiet, the Second Water. Learned men especially are of little use to the beginner in prayer -- unless the learned man practices prayer himself -- and understands from direct experience, not books.

For in the Second Water the soul begins to come in touch with the supernatural. It gets help from above. This she compares to using a windlass to draw water rather than raising by hand. In the Second Water, the Prayer of Quiet, the "weary labor of bringing memory and imagination under control" is achieved. The work isn't so strenuous because the level of water in the well is higher.

In Theresa's words, "The will becomes so occupied with prayer that it is taken captive by grace." The will becomes God's prisoner, surrendering to the love of Jesus. In this desirable condition the other two faculties cooperate. The memory and the imagination stay "recollected". A delicate state of balance is achieved which brings great consolation

because the prayer can be continued without weariness and indefinitely -- so it seems.

## TEARS OF JOY

The aspirant, devotee or student will know he or she has achieved the Prayer of Quiet because there will be tears in the eyes when he or she returns to physical consciousness. These tears are not of our shedding, writes Theresa, but are sent by God. They are tears of joy. This is the true joy of the Second Water. The soul begins to lose its desire for earthly things. No earthly honors, riches or delights can give it such satisfaction an inner peace. Theresa attributes the wetness of the eyes to the nearness of His Presence.

Also, writing from experience, Theresa warns that the devil can appear as an Angel of Light in this Second Water, and trap the unwary and indiscriminating, without the inexperienced soul realizing the danger of such deception.

It was this second state of prayer which gave inspiration to her writing. In it, she knew she was not writing from her own understanding. It gave her great joy to think of her soul as a garden with the Lord walking in it, increasing the fragrance of the Little Flowers of Virtue, preserving these for His greater glory.

As long as quiet can be maintained this Second Water gives peace and satisfaction, presumably because the will is in union with God despite all outward distractions. Theresa observes -- and probably learned from talking to many mystics of her Church -- that many souls come to this second stage of prayer and are content to remain there, not realizing the possibility of fuller citizenship in heaven. She came to realize the Second Water is only a pledge of greater things to come IF the soul prepares itself to receive them. An Eastern devotee would probably refer to the Yoga of One-Pointedness as leading the way to the third stage of prayer. The noise of the intellect must be quieted, the seething memory and stream of consciousness must be stopped or at least neutralized; for only then can the understanding be flooded with great Light. Then all things are seen with great clarity for what they are. No deception is possible.

Learning is put aside "in the Light of Infinite Wisdom". The Buddhist aspirant speaks of "the mind as the slayer of the Real" with its learning and great pride of knowledge. In climbing the ladder of prayer a single act of humility is of more value than all the teachings in the world! It helps to create a state of detachment most important to beginners. This leads to a state of quiet so deep that it is painful to have to speak, in this state of "silent sound".

## THE OVERWHELMING SHAME OF IMPERFECTION

The higher she climbed in meditation the more Theresa had to be afraid of her vices and weaknesses. At least they became glaringly apparent to her, or were revealed to her without her having to look for them, a humbling experience indeed.

This awareness of her imperfections made her aware also that the soul is really "in exile" while it is in physical embodiment, banished so to speak from heaven. She realized that the soul does not necessarily grow as the body grows. The soul can shrink and grow small with the humbling of pride. This is a necessary transformation if the disinterested love of God is to rise within us. This is a new blessing which brings desire for spells of solitude in which to enjoy it.

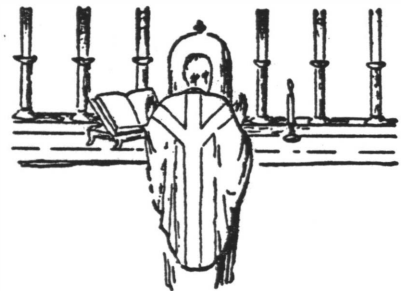
## THE THIRD WATER OF PRAYER

The Third Water is when God Himself feeds the garden of the soul with an overflowing spring. The pleasure, sweetness and delight of this Third Water are incomparably sweeter than the Second Water.

This is a sweet agony in which the soul is powerless to advance or retreat. It takes unutterable delight in the enjoyment of its agony. To Theresa this is fulfillment in God and death to the world. The reward is a heavenly madness in which true wisdom is acquired.

Theresa was so intoxicated and bewildered with the realization of this Third Water that she felt she could never explain it in words, or understand it! Her soul was in a state of adoration so full of sweet unrest and love it could not contain itself. All senses were occupied with God.

She was in the Third Water of Prayer during her actual writing of the description of it. The state was achieved during Communion, undeniable proof to her that the transubstantiation of the bread and the wine into the Body of Christ does take place; for the change of consciousness was so obvious within her! That change stayed with her after she returned to her cell to write about it. One revelation was the Church's martyrs enduring their tortures. She realized they did little or nothing of themselves. All was in the hands of God during this "heavenly madness"



This Third Water was a state of bliss she was loathe to give up and return to the world of the senses with its cares and for-

malities. "The soul longs to be free. Eating is killing it. Sleep brings it anguish. It sees itself wasting the hours of this life in comforts, though nothing can comfort it now but You! It seems to be living unnaturally, since now its desire is to live not in itself but in You."

The Cross prepared by the Lord for this stage of prayer was indeed light, Theresa found; yet it was heavy with a sweetness difficult to endure. She reminded her confessor that the description of the Third Water was for his eyes alone; she felt that the flow of words and ideas were so exaggerated as to have "overrun all bounds".

It was because sublime love was poured out without stint in this third stage of prayer, requiring no labor on the part of the Lord, the Gardener. The soul receives in a moment more ecstasy than it received in 20 years of intellectual effort. The flowers in the garden open and release great fragrance. The virtues are strong, enabling the soul to do great things. There is conscious enjoyment of the Great Work, unmindful of the world's pleasures.

This is in contrast to the Second Water, where the soul doesn't want to move in the Prayer of Quiet, delighting in blessed repose. The Third Water enables one to lead a contemplative and an active life at the same time! To her great joy she found that works of charity and professional Convent business could be carried on without disturbing the great joy of the Third Water.

To her, this was union of the soul with God. We are inclined to believe it was more like the union of the personality with the soul. The study of occult science was not available to her then. She would have abhorred it anyway; so she had to describe her experiences in the light of such understanding as she had. This makes them all the more illuminating.

#### THE FOURTH WATER OF PRAYER

Theresa had to pray for words to describe the total ecstasy and bliss of the Fourth Water. The soul is not entirely dead though it seems dead to the world. This sounds like a description of cataleptic trance!

She writes that all is sense enjoyment with no knowledge of what is being enjoyed. The soul realizes it is enjoying some good thing that contains all good things together but cannot comprehend the good thing! All the senses are taken up with this joy; so none is free to act in any way, either outwardly or inwardly. There is no power left in the body to express this joy. The soul cannot make known this union of faculties. Mind, soul

and spirit all seem to be one. The soul leaps out of itself like burning fire that has become one whole flame! Heavenly love creates a raising of the spirit from within. There is an elevation of consciousness within the union. And in this Fourth State of Prayer there is far greater detachment from creatures of the earth.

And from words also! She found it impossible to write of the Fourth Water. It was worse than trying to write in Greek, a language which she didn't know. So she broke off her attempts and went to Communion. There her needs were answered.

"God enlightened my understanding partly with words and partly by showing me how to use them. For there, as in the previous stage of prayer, His Majesty seemed willing to say what I myself can neither say nor understand."

The All-Present Creator had in mind the millions of the devout and faithful who would follow in the centuries after Theresa's live in Avila. They would find comfort, solace and inspiration in her writings, in which she would not say anything she did not know from plentiful experience.

"One moment of the Fourth Water of Prayer is reward enough for all the years of trials which preceded it."

From heaven comes an abundant rain which soaks up the whole garden when the gardener least expects it. In response the soul faints away in a kind of swoon. There is a great and all-pervading calm in which all the bodily powers progressively fail. All strength is gone. But this is returned in abundance after the trance is over. This may last for as long as half an hour.

Theresa writes that in the Fourth Water imagination and memory keep company with the will. All three rejoice together as they are completely absorbed in the Light. She wondered how the soul is occupied in this Fourth Water.

"It dissolves utterly, my daughter, to rest more and more in Me. It is no longer itself that lives; it is I. As it cannot comprehend what it understands, it understands by not understanding."

The self-chosen subject of meditation or prayer gave the mind support at the beginning of meditation, but this vanishes from the memory as mind and soul are absorbed in the Light of that great Love. The will is fully occupied with love, in loving, but understands not how it loves. Theresa was conscious of God's very presence, not realizing that this was her own Highest Self.

## TIME FOR HEROIC RESOLUTIONS

The soul is left with great tenderness in the Fourth Water of Prayer. It realizes its own vanity and begins to loathe the world. The flood of tears of joy only cause the disciple to burn the more. Great vows are made; for the fruits of this gardening are not its own. They must be shared with others; for there is no lack of diminution.

The results of the Fourth Water are permanent IF the garden has been thoroughly and properly prepared to receive the water. Preparation means a regular, daily program of prayers and meditation. This must not be interrupted or stopped, especially when the devotee or disciple allows feelings of guilt and unworthiness to overwhelm him or her.

Theresa stopped all prayers and devotions for a year because of guilt feelings, and plunged herself into hell. Finally she came to the realization that this was the devil's work! She had allowed him, the trickster, to stop all her progress.

One aspect of this kind of blockage was that it led the opening of her inner hearing, clairaudience. She called it "locutions". She had developed the habit of humbling herself, her proud spirit, by continually reminding herself of others who appeared to be more faithful than she was. Yet they did not seem to be receiving the gifts and mercies she was receiving from the Lord. Finally, He told her to mind her own business.

"Do not pry into this but serve Me!"

This first real, definite hearing with her inner ear frightened her because she didn't know such hearing was possible. It probably aroused considerable scepticism from her confessor when he was told about it.

## UNION OR RAPTURE, THERE IS A DIFFERENCE

Technical differences between these inward states of grace or beatitude could only be described by one who has experienced them many, many times.

Union, as she called it, seemed to be the same from beginning, through the middle, and to the end. It was altogether an inward experience.

Rapture, on the other hand, comes as a violent shock to the soul. It is an elevation of the spirit called ecstasy and much more beneficial than union. The devotee is caught up by the Lord and taken to heaven. The body gets cold as the soul is born away whether it likes it or not. Sometimes the result of this

rapture affected her whole body to where there was actual levitation. This advanced state of sublimation didn't begin to occur until after she became prioress of her little convent outside the walls of Avila.

#### A SOURCE OF EMBARRASSMENT

Once levitation took place while she was on her knees in choir. She was about to take Communion; so evidently the anticipation of the reception of the Host within her physical organism -- and its attendant radiant energies -- so expanded the cells of her body that gravity polarity was reversed.

The levitation must have been a great surprise and inspiration to the officiating priest and the other nuns, but it was a great embarrassment to Theresa. She asked the Lord to grant her no more such favors if they had to take place in public; nevertheless, the experience added greatly to her reputation for saintliness.

Actually, the levitation experience can be quite shattering. She did not lose consciousness while it happened, and for some reason it put her in great fear of "offending such a great God". This even while she was overwhelmed with love.

She found that rapture brought a strange detachment from the world, even an extreme loneliness, making life more painful, showing the soul why it is weary, because absent from the Good which contains all within itself. Her distress at being without companions reminded her of the Royal Prophet, David. He comforted her with knowledge that others had felt this extreme loneliness.

"I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top."  
Psalms 130:7.

It seemed that she was at the point of death, crucified between heaven and earth, finding comfort in neither; yet there was a sweet joy in her agony which made rapture out of martyrdom. She died to the physical body without physically dying! The death-like yearnings of this rapture became a habit of the soul. She knew she would not die, actually, but rapture stole over her whenever she was not busy. There was no relief in prayer and solitude anymore, but this sweet torment which became a new Grace. This is the Way of the Cross.

Theresa could only compare this Fourth Way of Prayer to the purifying of gold in a crucible. All the dross of her soul and body were burnt away, and in the world, not in the purgatory of the after-death life. Though at times her body was much like a corpse in this state of rapture, which often



lasted for hours. Yet it was light, feeling as though it had lost all weight -- thus the occasional actual levitations -- and consciousness seemed sometimes lost, too, with understanding and memory wandering and her faculties in a stupor for two or three days afterward.

### THE SOUL HAS GROWN WINGS!

Then comes the great distress of having to return to the demands of everyday life in the world. But with the wings of the Fourth Way is the strength to lift the standard of the Christ on high. The gardener has become captain of a fortress!

Her only desire was to obey the Commander, fearing no dangers but actually courting them! And with all assurance of victory. She found that in this state of rapture the soul does not have to give its consent to anything. The consent has already been given. The dedication has been made, to spread these truths of exalted consciousness abroad at any cost.

And yet what pain it was to have to return to the business of the world, even to wasting time attending to the body, from which she could not run away, a prisoner in chains. The wretchedness of life wearied her. In the writings of Paul (Paulus, Apollos, Apollonius) she found one who had achieved the Fourth Way before her, especially in Romans, Chapter VII, and among those verses the 24th, where she found Paul praying to be delivered from the tomb of the flesh.

"Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

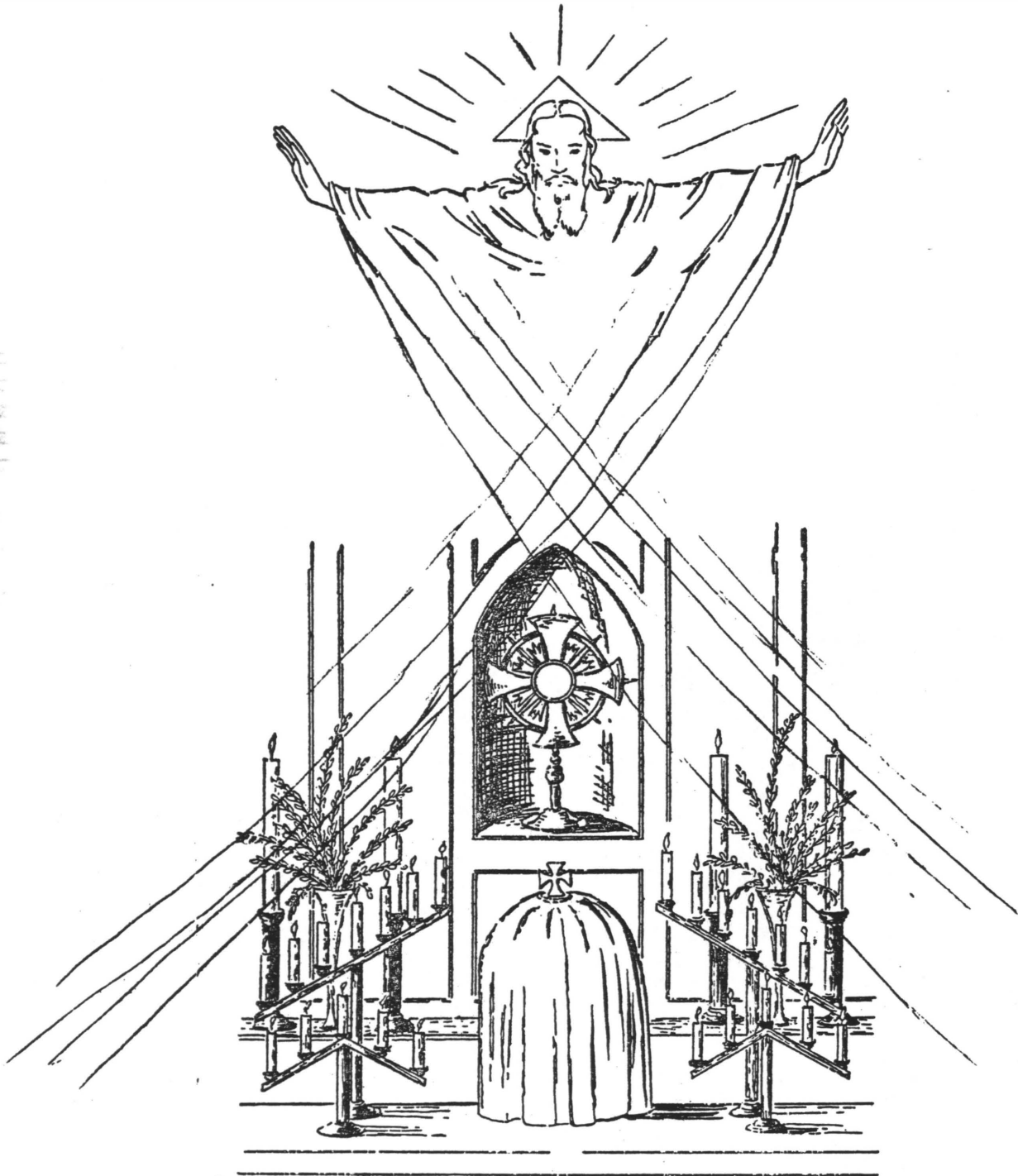
Now she knew that the lives of the saints must have been a continual martyrdom when the flaming love of God burst so strong within them. Living the Truth of life made everything else seem to childish. She laughed at the holy men of the church around her, belaboring their points of honor, power and prestige. These she had trampled underfoot long ago. If these men would only put love of God above their dignity! Then they could achieve more good in a day than in ten years of care for their authority.

Apollonius wrote: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present in me." Not only present but necessary, Theresa was to learn. She knew with all assurance of experience that everything was a means of increasing her knowledge, and what had harmed her before now helped her, humbling and strengthening her soul at the same time.

The true revelations and visions of Rapture taught her to despise those religious trappings which had so thrilled her in those earlier years in the Convent of the Incarnation.

## THE PASSION? OR THE RESURRECTION?

The vital difference between the Passion and the Resurrection became clear to Theresa. The radiant love of the Christ in the Bread and the Wine was real to her. Through it she became fully conscious of the Presence of the Lord during Communion. She saw Him glorified as she took the Bread and the





wine. He was a true and present companion to all who believed in Him. Thus she came to realize the great tragedy of the dogma of the priesthood of the Church, continually dwelling on the suffering of the Passion, with Christ crucified or suffering by the roadside, His body broken and pouring blood.

Now, by personal experience, She knew Him to be free from pain and full of glory! That Radiant Presence was everywhere. This Theresa called "His most sacred Humanity". This was the door of Understanding by which "His most sovereign Majesty would reveal great secrets to us", that is, if we aren't held down in consciousness to the blood and suffering of the Passion by an ignorant and venal priesthood.

This emphasis on the lower emotions has its place in the evolution of the soul, a necessary stage on the Path of return to the Father's house; but to hold a people there deliberately century after century as does the Church, is to stifle Spiritual growth. The Resurrection is the goal!

In Laredo's book, "The Ascent of Mt. Zion", Theresa found a full description of the "union of the soul with God". She underlined these passages in Laredo's work and showed them to a "pious gentleman" -- her confessor, no doubt, and a jealous priest who envied her having surpassed him in spiritual growth. So, instead of praising and encouraging her in the Path she had chosen he accused her of having traffic with the devil. Her sublime experiences were the work of an evil spirit. He didn't have any such visions of the resurrected Christ during Communion.

Beyond that he caused her great trials by freely passing his opinions around in the convent and the town. Because of this she was finally told to confess to a Jesuit and to adhere strictly to his instructions. This to a woman who had conscious contact with the Christ, both clairaudience and clairvoyance.

The Jesuit told her not to give up her prayers at all, but each day's prayer must be based on one incident in the Passion. She was only to think of Christ's humanity, not of His Godhood; and she was not to accept any raptures. That should hold her down to the acceptable control level deemed necessary



by the military arm of the Church, the Pope's Commandos in modern terms. Theresa writes that she faithfully followed the Jesuit's instructions "to this day". She thus saved herself from torture and death at the hands of the Inquisition.

Outwardly, she held herself deliberately in the God the Redeemer level of evolution, the second phase of four-cycle Spiritual development; but inwardly she had moved on to the third, God the Illuminator phase, and could not prevent this regardless of how much her Jesuit instructor insisted on her concentrating on the Passion. By resisting God's favors and continually trying to turn her mind from Him, she forced Him to instruct her directly.

The result was that she was continually Illumined, surrounded with sweetness and glory from which she could not flee in any direction! No resistance could be offered to this Light which welled up from within her, any time, any place.

#### THE FOUR CYCLES

These four cycles follow each other as naturally as day follows night. There is no way of avoiding them any more than one can avoid going through the four seasons, which they represent in human affairs.

First there is God the Creator. Second is God the Redeemer. Third is God the Illuminator. Fourth is God the Destroyer. The last is as necessary as the first if old forms are to be destroyed, cleared out of the way so there will be room for new creation! The tragedy of the Roman Catholic Church is that it endeavors to hold its people in the second phase. This is true of all organized priesthoods on the earth, whether it be the Sanhedrin of the Jews, the Brahmins of the Hindus, Mormons, Buddhists or Mohammedans. If the people move on to the God The Illuminator phase of evolution, the priests lose their hold on them, and thus lose their power. This is what all illumined Saints of the Church have discovered by experience.

The Lord lightened Theresa's burden at this time by obtaining a change of confessors. The new one was an enlightened man if not an illumined one. He confirmed her experiences and instructed her not to resist if the Lord transported her during the prayers of the Passion, or stations of the Cross.

The reciting of the Veni Creator brought on a great rapture suddenly after a whole day of prayer. The Lord spoke to her directly for the first time.

"I want you to converse not with men but with angels."  
Her need for books and for physical plane instructors was just

about over. There was no need for her confessor to give her commands any more. Her "commands" came from within. This change in direction affected a great change in physical relationships. Old friendships and attachments fell away from her, with the few exceptions of those who shared her dedication to God and to prayer. Her health changed for the better because she found new strength to carry on her work.

### THE WHITE, AND THE BLACK

The "locutions" from the Lord continued. They were heard with the inner ear, of course. She found that this cannot be closed when the Lord speaks. It couldn't be closed when lying spirits spoke to her either, not at least until she developed some control or selectivity.

Theresa found that false locutions could not be made out so clearly, and when she followed them they gave no definite results. True locutions led to worthwhile accomplishments. They gave light to the soul and made it quiet and happy even though the locutions might be a reproof.

These spoken words of guidance did not come during the other waters of prayer, during union or rapture; for then all the senses seemed to be shut down. Instruction came afterward. Of course there were doubts, but the true locutions were always fulfilled. Thus she gradually developed discrimination, between the false and the true.

Her doubts were allayed by the All-Powerful Presence of the Lord. Six of her close friends and confessors decided that her visions and locutions were of the devil. She was even ordered to give up Communion and prayer! One can imagine her sore distress at these devilish commands from priests who really worshipped the devil, the false Christ, without realizing it; for Thresa was obedient, as always; but during some of these conversations or arguments the Lord spoke to her directly; so she heard one thing from her confessor and another thing from the Lord at the same time! The conflict was exhausting.

Sometimes the Lord told her to do one thing, the confessor another. "Obey the confessor," came the Voice from within. Then while she was doing this the Lord changed the confessor's mind so that he reversed himself! Such demonstrations of Spiritual power were awe-inspiring and strengthened her faith in the Path she had chosen.

Another great test of her faith came 23 years after she took the Veil. The Grand Inquisitor decreed no more reading for the nuns of the Church. By 1559 it must have become obvious that the women of the Church were escaping control and

learning to think for themselves. Theresa, of course, was an outstanding example of this threatened liberation of women; so all books in Spanish were forbidden them. Theresa could not read Latin. How distressing this was to a woman for whom books had been one of her greatest consolations.

"Do not be distressed," said the Lord to her in one of His locutions, "for I will give you a living book."

#### MUCH TO THINK ABOUT

At that time she had not had visions, so she says, and could not quite understand the meaning of this locution. But within a few days of the Jesuit's decree visions did come to her, and so clearly she could understand them perfectly. These gave her so much to think about and consider that there was no need for books any more. She was learning straight from life, by direct observation and not through the eyes of another.

Theresa's desire to obey her confessor in all things was another reason for the need for visions, for direct, undeniable instruction in things spiritual. His insistence that her locutions and raptures were of the devil caused her to try to give them up entirely, to deny their reality, for two years. Some of her friends concurred with the confessor.

Suddenly, one day, she was conscious of the Christ by her side! She was frightened, rather than inspired or lifted up. Tears flowed, until words from Him calmed her distraught nerves. In strictest obedience she rushed to the confessor to confess.

"Who told you it was Jesus Christ?"

"He told me so Himself! But before He ever said it, it was impressed on my understanding that it was He. . ."

We can well imagine the angry reactions within the heart of this so-called divine, member of an order which prides itself on rational thought.

God speaks to mortals in a celestial language impossible of understanding by the rational minded. His words are heard only in the innermost part of the soul. Theresa found this impossible to explain to a priest who himself was not awakened to the Inner Light but only gave an outward show of dedication to prayer.

But these visions gave her an unshakable determination to carry on. She was so learned in exalted mysteries she found she could boldly argue with any theologian and confound him in to shamed silence. Of course some of the secrets of the visions,

were impossible to describe; or perhaps even more important, they were her treasures, too holy to be exposed to the gaze or scepticism of the profane.

#### THE FORM VISIONS OF THE LOWER PLANE

One day at prayer the Lord showed His beautiful hands to her. Another time it was His divine face. Eventually the whole form was revealed in a diffused, soft, white radiance that to her, nevertheless, dimmed the brilliance of the sun by comparison.

Her intuition told her that earlier visions where there was no form of any kind, only exalted states of consciousness of various kinds, were actually higher. But to a devotee locked in the tomb of the flesh presentations of the Divine Presence are important "for the sake of the memory and a useful occupation for the imagination".

They also gave her tremendous assurance against the degrading and belittling comments of her Confessors. The visions of the Body of the Lord made Theresa a different person. She said they "took away her vices and gave her virtues". In her heart she knew these form visions could not be the devil's work regardless of what her Jesuit confessors said!

Her own inner strength and spiritual growth became obvious to her in comparison with her confessors. These poor priests had no thought, no will of their own. They were the creatures of their superiors and did not trust themselves, having to run to their superior with every detail for a correct interpretation. If the priest had been persuaded, in spite of himself or his training, to believe the honesty of Theresa's confessions, his superior soon put him straight on that! The priest was not to be taken in by this wily woman, possessed of the devil; nor was she to be believed. This made it tough on the confessor; for she answered their questions plainly and without consideration of their feelings or reactions.

Theresa spoke as one having authority! In the opinion of her Jesuit confessor this was not the kind of humility proper to a nun and a person of the inferior sex.

Regardless of what they said -- and they said plenty, no doubt -- she realized that her visions could not be the work of her imagination. She knew that mental pictures could be perfected and committed to memory, and summoned up any time one wanted to do it. But the true visions of the Lord's humanity came unasked, when He was pleased to show Himself to her. To these visions her mind could neither add nor subtract; for when she tried to concentrate on some detail of the appearance,

such as the color of His eyes or the shape of the mouth, the vision faded and disappeared.

"His gaze is so powerful my soul cannot endure it," she wrote. Feelings of humility and shame arose in her and like a true mystic she could only react by admonishing herself, "Let us always walk in fear".

Where the Church and the priests continually emphasized Christ crucified, her visions continually emphasized Christ Glorified! This was after He had arisen from the dead. Such a spontaneous vision of Him came to her during Communion, when she looked at the Host. These constant reminders of their own self-imposed limitations infuriated her confessors to where they didn't want to hear her describe them.

One spiritually blind character ordered her to make the sign of the Cross and to snap her fingers when Christ appeared to her. "God will take the vision of Christ away from you and relieve you of the deception."

But that other Confessor, the Christ, warned her of these Jesuitical attempts to break her down before the instructions were given and told her the Saints would preserve her from the priestly deception. On their feast days, St. Peter and St. Paul did appear to her and gave her strength and comfort.

#### ETHERIC-PHYSICAL CRYSTALS

Another assurance of the Lord's reality, presence and power was the special treatment of the cross of her rosary. He took it from her during one of the visions. When it was returned it had four large, precious stones mounted on it. These were exquisitely encised with the five wounds of the Christ. But these precious jewels could not be physically touched or seen. They were visible only to psychic sight.

At times, during especially trying situations in her efforts to carry His cross, He would appear and show His wounds. Then He would also tell her how to answer her jealous confessors. This was another proof of His reality.

Again and again she was forced to face up to the sad inadequacies of her Church and the need for really meaningful reforms. One of the greatest needs was for confessors with strong character, men of understanding who could give real help to women making progress on the Devotional Path. One of the best of those she met was Peter of Alcantara. He told her that the kind of visions and raptures she was having came more to women than to men, because of their natural devotional natures. There is need for Master teachers, both in and out of the flesh.



## THE CONSUMMATION OF HER SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

An Angel of the Lord appeared to her, standing at her left side. She called him a Cherubim with a golden spear. He plunged this point of fire into her heart several times. Each time he pulled it out it felt to her as though her heart and entrails were being pulled out with it, causing her to moan in spiritual pain. She frankly called this a wooing and as a result of this divine copulation she experienced a spiritual orgasm which left her in a stupor for days! The rapture was so noticeable her sister nuns talked about it, greatly to her distress.

A supernatural love for God was implanted in her, robbing her of all power of action, coming in mighty impulses which were neither uncontrollable devotion nor emotional unrest. The source of this fire was controlled with gentle tears, but not otherwise could this "wounding" of the soul be described. It must be experienced, this pain so sweet no worldly delight can equal it, a bewildering combination of joy and sorrow.

## AND ITS FRUIT

The idea of a true Barefoot Order of nuns came up in conversation with friends. Though Theresa was happy in her present surroundings the comparative worldliness of the Order was a constant irritant to her; so there was this talk of the founding of a new convent and ways to develop sources of revenue for it.

Then came a powerful vision during Communion. The Lord appeared to her and commanded her to found such a House and carry on with all her strength in loving service. The convent would be named St. Joseph's, a star with a most brilliant light, with the Lord guarding one door and Our Lady the other.

Theresa didn't know what to do. This was contrary to the whole direction of her existence as far as she was concerned. She wanted to quit the world and become one with God! Evidently the manner of earning such deliverance had not been made clear to her; so this seemed an intolerable burden laid upon her by the Lord: to create and administer a worldly organization.

The Lord told her to consult with her confessor. To her surprise, he did not object nor ridicule the project but rather told her to take it up with her director, the Provincial. This she could not do directly but left it to a friend. Again the response was positive, at first, but as the word of Theresa's wild idea spread then came the ridicule and persecution which caused Theresa real suffering. This experience opened her eyes



Lorenzo Bernini's famous sculpture of Theresa receiving the shafts of an angel of the hosts of Cherubim (Yesod on the Tree of Life). The Italian completed the figures in 1652 in the Cornaro Chapel of Santa Maria della Vittoria.

to the tremendous suffering experienced by those Roman Catholic Saints who had founded Orders. They had endured much more than she had imagined, she realized, when her Provincial wavered and refused to sanction her new Order of Discalced or Barefoot Nuns. But with the Lord guiding her every step Theresa never wavered in her faith that the new House would be established. Neither did her lay friend.

#### FAITH CONFIRMED

The Provincial reversed himself again! He told her that the scheme should not be abandoned. The girls should put their trust in God. Other saintly persons reversed themselves and decided to help. This was further proof of the reality of Theresa's visions. They even found means to purchase a small house outside the walled city of Avila.

Then the Provincial reversed himself again!! He refused to sanction the purchase. Her confessor could do nothing but go along with his superior and agreed that she should drop the project.

Support was not forthcoming from her sister nuns. In fact they were insulted that she should even express a desire to found a more strictly enclosed House. They expressed themselves quite clearly that she could serve God just as well where she was, and could support her present House by raising money for it!

Out of this Theresa learned to practise that detachment from worldly events which is so essential to spiritual growth. Outwardly, she let the project drop. She was especially hurt when she received a nasty letter from her confessor telling her to forget her worthless dream because of the scandal it had raised in the cloisters and in the city. The Forces of Evil had done their work well.

But the reward to Theresa for making the effort and standing up to the opposition to the limit of her powers was well rewarded. She found that her raptures became deeper, more profound. Her capacity to love expanded. Her precious project was not to die at all. It was simply taken out of her hands by a Dominican father-friend and the lay sister, a woman of means. They went over the Provincial's head by sending an outline of the scheme to Rome! New of this in the city stirred up another storm against Theresa, to where she was even threatened with the Inquisition! Those who profited by or enjoyed the corruption of the Cloisters didn't want any change for the better, especially from this strictly faithful saint; but she was amused by the threats. She who would have sacrificed herself a thousand times for the Holy Scriptures. The months went by, six of them, then came a vision of the Lord in which he told her not to worry.

her distress would soon be over. Things would change.

This revelation was a great delight to Theresa. She interpreted it to mean the close approach of death. She would soon escape the world with all its trouble and misery! One of her troubles was her confessor. He had been ordered to tell her to severely restrict her activities; however she realized that he was not free either. He had no will of his own but had to defer everything to his superiors.

#### THINGS DID CHANGE!

It wasn't death but a change of Rectors at her convent that the Lord had in mind. This new leader was spiritual and a man of great courage. Theresa's confessor was ordered to put no restrictions on her but rather to let the spirit of the Lord work in her without restraint!

Theresa found to her delight that she could unburden her self to these men with a freedom or expression and feeling she had never known before, though they were frightened by some of her visions. She was commanded to take up again her project of the St. Joseph's convent with them. This time she was encouraged, though instructed to proceed with greatest secrecy; so completion of the purchase of the little house was accomplished quietly through Theresa's sister.

She had no money and despaired of completing the project, but St. Joseph appeared to her and encouraged her to go ahead. Sure enough, money did come in the most astonishing ways and from unexpected sources. Furnishings were bought, enough to "move in as best you can", as the Lord had told her. Later, after Communion, He appeared to her to comment "on the greed of humankind, to imagine that there will not be enough room for you! How often did I sleep in the open air, having nowhere else to lay my head."

Others of the Church's celestial hierarchy showed their interest in the project. St. Clare appeared to Theresa at Communion on that Saint's day. She was in great beauty of form. She told the nun to take courage and "move forward with what you have begun. I will help!"

Another really overwhelming vision was of Mary and Joseph. This came on the festival of Our Lady's Assumption. Theresa was at Mass when she was lifted up in great rapture, to find herself clothed in dazzling white, a garment of purity created for her by Our Lady on her right and St. Joseph on her left! Theresa understood this as a cleansing of her sins, among them the continued self-indulgence of dwelling too much on past sins and wickedness. It was time she grew out of this habit of

re-crucifying herself, feeding her martyr complex.

#### A TALISMAN FROM "OUR LADY"

After clothing the nun with light Mary took Theresa by the hands and promised that her plans for the convent would be fulfilled. The project would not fail! At any time. This ascended Being then gave Theresa a jewel as a token of her affection. She hung around the nun's neck a gold cross encrusted with beautiful jewels. To Theresa these etheric constructs were more beautiful than anything on earth. In that exalted state of consciousness, no doubt, Theresa could see the beams of light radiating from the jewels in all directions. She was flooded with great joy and bliss, more than any she had known before.

The vision culminated in Mary and Joseph ascending into the heavens, accompanied by a great host of angels.

It was Theresa's intention to turn her convent over to the control of the Order to which she belonged. The Lord informed her that it would not be wise to do this and quite impracticable. His reasons were so logical there was nothing to do but go along with them. The far-seeing wisdom of His guidance soon proved itself. It also proved the reality of her visions!

She was told to plan on placing herself and her convent under the obedience of the Bishop, rather than her Order, and to refer to Rome by a certain procedure which would give her the necessary security and to assure completion of the negotiations. The Bishop, Don Alvaro de Mendoza, proved to be a good man and helpful to her house.

Theresa knew that if the Provincial heard of her revived negotiations to found the convent, he would stop it by ordering her to give it up, an order which must be obeyed. The Lord moves in wondrous ways his Mysteries to perform. The answer to this problem was to take Theresa completely away from Avila! And out of touch until the Brief or approval of the convent arrived from Rome several months later.

This was another part of the big change that had been predicted for her; and a most instructive change it was, for it took Theresa into the home of a wealthy and titled Spanish lady, Dona Luisa de la Cerda, sister of a Duke. Imagine the shock of being removed from the simple routine of convent life to the worldly surroundings of a palace. But it certainly was not paradise! The lady was in need of spiritual counseling and guidance, burdened with wealth and heavy social obligations. By direct observation Theresa learned how intolerable these could be. The lady was not free to live her own life! Servants were

a care and a responsibility. Theresa saw that the masters of Spain were actually slaves to their worldly responsibilities. They were no more willing to give up their burdens than she was to leave her post in Avila. She felt that she would be a deserter in coming to this other city, but the Lord appeared to her in a rapture and assured that it would be best to be a good distance away from Avila until the Brief for her House arrived from Rome.

Her cross was no lighter here in her new position as spiritual counselor. Others, who should have been more spiritual, were envious and jealous of her favored position. Worldly pleasures were a constant temptation to disregard her vows of renunciation, but this critical attention of others helped her to stay on the straight and narrow path.

One, however, was different, a nun who had walked barefoot all the way to Rome to get a patent to found a house of the Order. The Lord brought this nun to visit Theresa for her enlightenment. This nun also had been inspired by a vision of Our Lady and her dedication was equal to Theresa's. The Avilan learned that her own Order had originally been founded on the Vow of Poverty. But this rule, unknown to Theresa, had been mitigated by Rome so the Order could accumulate wealth, for the power and the glory of the Church!

Heretofore, Theresa had been unaware of the anxieties arising from the possession of property. Now she was experiencing it at first hand in the home of this noble lady. Another important lesson for this sister of the Church, who had always felt that poverty was best; now she knew it. The begging of alms was a noble profession for one in her position and the only way to maintain the high moral standards she demanded of herself. All whom she had previously consulted insisted that her House be founded on revenue or it would fail. But this was the very thing that had distracted nuns from their first obligation to Service! Poverty was the perfect way and there was no persuading her to any other view once she knew that poverty had once been part of the Rule of her House.

Her vision of Christ on the cross, poor and naked, reassured her that she could not bear to be rich.

Another source of support was her spiritual adviser, Peter of Alcantara. This holy man commanded her that on no account should she abandon her plan for a barefoot order of nuns. He had practised the vow of poverty for years and gave her much precious knowledge based on experience. The Lord appeared to her in a rapture and commended poverty as the only Way. He promised her that she would never be short of the necessities of life.

## THE CROSS AWAITING IN AVILA

Accustomed to the routine in the palace at Toledo, Theresa was again shocked to receive word that her Provincial had revoked the order compelling her to stay in that city. She was free to stay or return home. But also came word that the House of her Order in Avila needed a mother superior and she, Theresa, was under consideration for the post.

This was even a greater shock. The last thing Theresa wanted was the heavy labor and responsibility involved in administering a large convent. Her ambition was to get out of the world as fast as she could, not to tie herself more firmly to it with worldly responsibilities! So she praised God she was not in Avila and wrote to friends there not to vote for her.

But there were those other plans she herself had set in motion and the Lord appeared to her and told her she must go. He said if she wanted a cross there was a good one awaiting her there. Weeping sadly she left Toledo for Avila, thinking that her cross was to be Mother Superior of a large convent.

When she did get there she was astonished to learn that the Brief for her own little convent had just arrived from Rome! That same night!

In His mysterious ways the Lord had also brought her a lot of support: Earthly power in the person of her Bishop, and her spiritual advisor in the flesh, Peter of Alcantara. It was the prestigious Peter who persuaded the Bishop to let Theresa found her house in poverty, and he persuaded others with all his authority to come to Theresa's aid. This must have been the Bishop's last important worldly obligation; for he died within a week. Theresa felt the Lord had purposely preserved the man "until her business was over".

These important details of establishing the little convent were all done in secrecy. Even Theresa was removed from the center of action so she wouldn't have to evade the questions of her curious sisters. Her brother-in-law fell ill and she was given leave to remain at home with him. Theresa shrewdly observes that the illness lasted only so long as the negotiations.

So, St. Joseph's Convent was founded on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1562, ten years before the infamous massacre of the Protestants in Paris.

What a triumph it was for Theresa when the Holy Sacrament was brought to her convent. She was also able to give the Habit



there to two nuns who were ready to take the veil. They also had four orphans to support. This was a great joy to Theresa, as was the Blessed Sacrament. It was like heaven to have it there, in her House.

## SHUTTING THE WORLD OUT

She chose to observe the Rule of our Lady of Carmel. This was drawn up by Friar Hugo, Cardinal of Santa Sabina and published in 1248, the fifth year of the reign of Pope Innocent IV. To her, the only life was the religious life. The vow of Enclosure under the Rule she chose would be sweet and easy, the only life giving her peace of mind.

And yet she worried too about shutting herself up in so strict a house. She was still subject to much illness. As she looked at the holy Sacrament a ray of light from it revealed that her worries were the devil's work. Of course she demanded trials; now she had them because she had violated her Obedience without a mandate from her Provincial. She had also placed her convent under the Ordinary's jurisdiction. Nevertheless, she vowed to do everything in her power to obtain permission to enter her new home.

Sure enough, Theresa's superior ordered her to appear before her. She went, knowing plenty of trouble was waiting. Even hoping she might be thrown in prison! This would have been a great joy because she was in need of solitude, being worn out from dealing with people.

Her superior sent her before the Provincial, who rebuked her severely for scandalizing the people of Avila! She begged him to punish her and to forgive her. Her sin was bringing new ideas into the community. How radical to propose and establish a convent without an endowment, and designed to exist only on alms!

Actually, neither the Provincial nor her sister nuns saw any reason to condemn her, after all she did have a Brief from Rome. But the devil found plenty of willing agents in the townspeople and they condemned her and stirred up a great turmoil. Theresa felt no distress at the condemnation of herself and her actions. She was distressed by the idea that there might be dissolution of her precious project -- until the Lord spoke directly to her. "Do you not know that I am powerful? What are you afraid of? The foundation will not be dissolved!"

This statement in face of the fact that the town wanted St. Joseph's broken up and the Holy Sacrament removed. They even took the case to the Royal Council in Madrid! It was a grand lawsuit. But Theresa had no money for lawyers to repre-



sent her side of the case. The Provincial would not even let her move to her new House. Her nuns had to carry on without her there. Even Theresa's Prioress conspired with the forces of Evil arrayed against her and told her to give the project up for good. What else could the good nun do but leave it all in the Lord's hands, and go on with the daily routines of convent life, calm and untroubled in the radiance of this invisible but very real Benefactor.

#### GOD'S ADVOCATE

Theresa's cross was picked up by Father Gonzalo de Aranda. He was the priest who had given her the Habit when she became a nun 26 years earlier! He it was who went to Madrid to plead her case in court, of his own volition and without compensation. He also stirred up the criticism of his peers and of the townspeople for deliberately reserving the Holy Sacrament for Theresa's new House.

She was astonished at all the trouble the devil took about a few poor women, implanting a universal belief among the townspeople that they could do great harm to Avila while living in strict Enclosure!

With the Lord's help Father Aranda finally won out in Madrid, after six months of pleadings; but he did have to yield the one important point, Theresa's House of St. Joseph must have an endowment. She was so worn out by this time that she was willing to agree with it. But she found to her surprise that the Lord was not willing. During her nightly prayers He appeared to her and said "absolutely not".

Another surprise visitant was her mentor, Peter of Alcantara. He appeared in all his glory during her prayers and reminded her of the promise he had exacted from her before his death, the Vow of Poverty. She must stay with it. He pointed out to her that the devil's opposition to her work was a good sign that St. Joseph's would render great service to mankind. She must insist on this point, of poverty, and everything would turn out as she wished. What an inspiration it was to her to see Peter in his glorified soul and body.

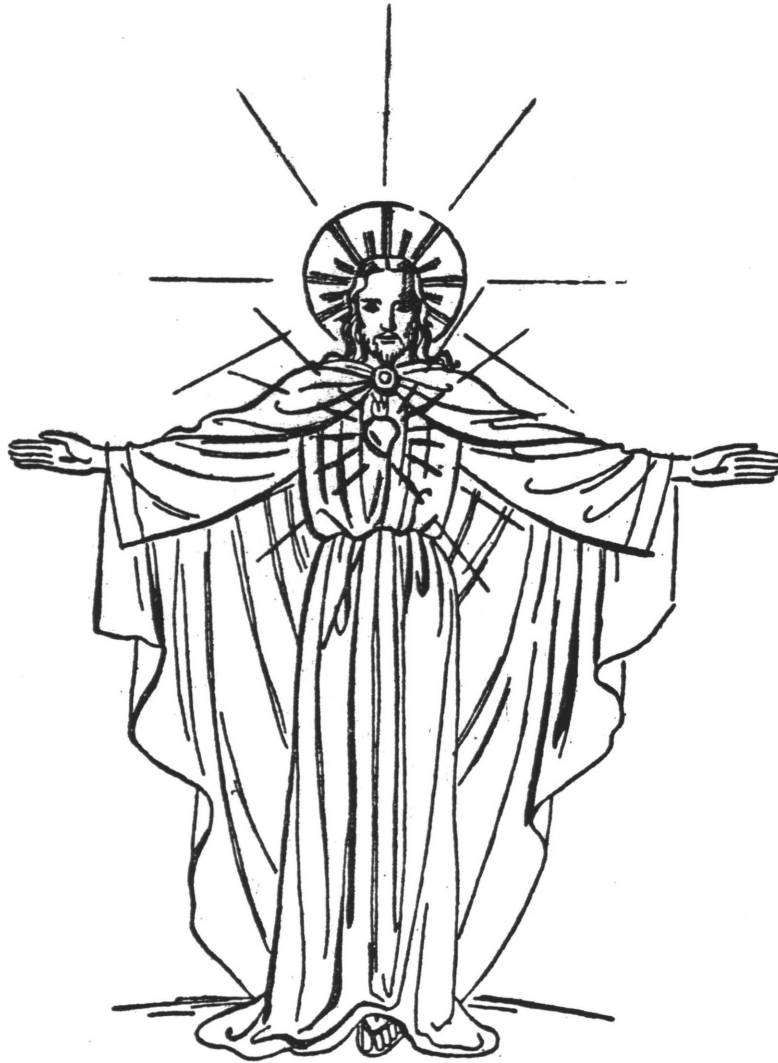
Greatly troubled, Theresa went to Father Aranda and told him of her determination to stick to principles. To her surprise and joy, Father Aranda agreed with her, the strict Rule should be observed at St. Joseph's; but it had to be taken up with a commission; so another month's long wrangle ensued.

The Power of the Lord ruled supreme. Theresa was finally allowed to leave her old convent, through the intercession of a Dominican prior, who prevailed on her Provincial to let her go. She brought other nuns with her on one of the most joyful

days of her life after all those years of trouble.

### INITIATION

Her joy lifted her into a complete rapture during prayer. The Christ received her with great love and placed a crown on her head. He thanked her for all she had done for his Mother. Then during Compline saw Our Lady in greatest glory, Her white robe sheltering them all.



Devoted people came to Mass celebrated in the little convent. More nuns were received. Even those who had been most bitter in their opposition to the establishment of St. Joseph's now reversed themselves and agreed that it would have been wrong to abandon the scheme. They brought alms to show their approval of that which they had condemned! So, St. Joseph's prospered without appeals being made for alms. For the truly dedicated

person, the Vow of Poverty becomes a fact of life. Theresa was sure this perpetual observance of their Rule was absolutely necessary for any nun who wished to enjoy the company of their Bridegroom, the Christ, in solitude.

She found great joy among such detached souls as had taken the habit with her. Solitude was their delight. Their sole conversation was with God. Nor did they care to talk about anything else with those who came to visit with them at their Enclosure.

To Theresa it was lack of spirituality in any who found the rule of her Convent to harsh to bear. If they wanted salvation they would have to go elsewhere. They would have to do without those "astonishing varieties of degrees of bliss" which she experienced in her visions and raptures.

#### THE HUMAN SIDE OF IT

The desperate need for male polarity was there in the earlier years and it is revealed in Theresa's writings. She found that she tended to idolize any man who liked her. Her memory would dwell fondly on him, leaving her bewildered and foolish, disturbing her concentration on her work of prayer and service.

Eventually, of course, she succeeded in replacing these earthly idols with the One above all others, the Christ within. "A vision of the Christ left me with an impression of His great beauty, which is with me still." Every vision or revelation was of great value to her soul.

Personal instruction from the Lord was most revealing. He told her to set her personal will on Him, rather than on earthly vanities and men, in which it had formerly been employed. He reminded her of the times when she had opposed His honor with her own honor. She suffered so many bad states one wonders how she ever won through to the higher ones. She blamed it all on the Devil.

"He would suddenly seize my thoughts and turn my brain upside down, doing what he liked with it, with the most trivial thoughts which would otherwise be laughable."

When she searched about for relief it seemed that God would allow her to find none! Faith is benumbed and asleep at such times. The soul burns inwardly without knowing who has kindled the fire, or whence it came, or how to escape it. Reading is impossible and to converse with anyone is worse.

This sounds like hysteria resulting from suppression of the sex force. Such troubles cleared up later when she learned to transmute or sublimate it all in her work and service, such as

her daily prayers that souls be released from purgatory, the newly dead whom she had known in her work. She would have visions of their rising on her right, from purgatory to heaven, sometimes accompanied by the Christ.

#### AN ALLY REWARDED

Brother Ibanez was one of those brave souls who had given her encouragement and support in the founding of her House. He passed on. She had a vision of him with a white dove over his head as she prayed for him. She saw him rising from the depths of the earth on her right ascending into heaven with the greatest joy. He had consulted her about the long raptures which came to him every time after saying Mass.

During another vision of Ibanez, Theresa saw him receiving a white cape over his shoulders from Our Lady. This vestment was given to him as a reward for having helped Theresa. He appeared to her in great glory several times thereafter.

Theresa was also given messages and had visions concerning her Jesuit confessors. Christ on the Cross in one vision gave her some words of warning to pass on to the Rector of the House of her Order. He was a Jesuit and was due for trials and tribulations.

One vision of the Society of Jesus itself showed its members in heaven with white banners flying. She saw their lives conforming to what the Lord told her about them. Was it about the Inquisition? The world-wide thrust of their missionary effort to convert all the world to Roman Catholicism at any cost? How fortunate for the world that these religious fanatics failed! At the time of her writing, the 1560s, Laynez, the second Father General of the Pope's commandos was running the Order.

In the 16th Century the Japanese welcomed the Christian missionaries, but when the subversive character of the Jesuit penetration was finally realized by the War Lords in the 17th Century, Christians of both races were savagely executed and Japan was closed to all foreigners. The leaders were determined not to become a part of the Holy Roman Empire.

Within the Church itself there was plenty of devilish activity going on and the sisters of Theresa's little House were terrified by the attacks. She writes that once the Devil appeared clearly on her left hand, with a great, bright flame from his body. He threatened her in a loud voice that he would capture her still! She crossed herself and he disappeared, only to return again. Holy water was handy and she sprayed drops at him. This time he disappeared for good, in that form. Another appearance was as a little black boy with gnashing teeth. Was this an

objectification of one of her own Catholic bigotries? It seems likely; for his presence caused her to writhe in pain. She threw holy water at this imp and he and the pain disappeared; but she was left weary, as though she had been beaten.

#### ABREACTING KARMA

Her sister nuns heard great blows being struck around Theresa while she was in prayer. She felt nothing. They also smelled brimstone after such an attack. It was her service to offer herself as a sacrifice to devils tormenting other people. The healing forces of the Christ apparently used her aura as a fulcrum with which to pry these artificial elementals loose from their victims, burn up their desire bodies in a blue flame, and send them to an appropriate Astral hell.

She discovered one man who had been living in mortal sin of the most abominable kind, but did repent in confession. Of course he continued to be assailed by temptation. His "familiar" was desperate to continue its existence by vampirizing him. Theresa's technique was to pray that she relieve him by suffering the torment herself. This went on for a month. He was astonished to be helped in this way, and she was astonished to be so used, at first. Her letters to him told him of her torment, giving him strength and gratitude to endure.

Another time a devil appeared to her on her prayer book. This was while she was in oratory at night. She banished him with the Sign of the Cross -- a sign of the Love of the Christ -- only to have him return again and again after the banishings. Finally she used holy water to be rid of him for good. As she did this she had a vision of souls being released from purgatory as a result of her action. She felt that this devil was trying to prevent their deliverance.

A great crowd of devils surrounded her another night, but they were held away by a greater light which enfolded her. The lesson of this experience was how little power these unfortunate creatures really have, unless the target of their attack is himself or herself opposing God through weakness and vanity. "A soul resigned into God's hands does not care whether it is spoken ill or well of, so long as it has right understanding."

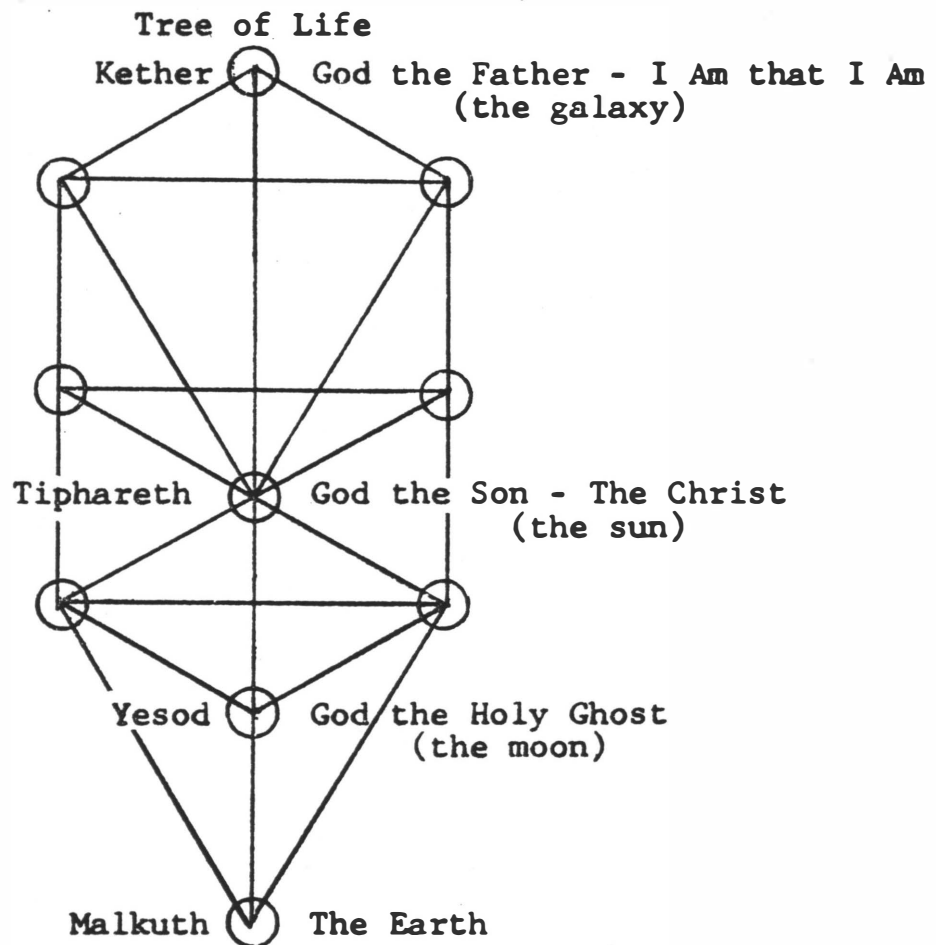
She progressed to where her soul was complete mistress of itself when undergoing persecutions. The world was beneath her feet. Then raptures would come over her. Some times these spells would come over her while in public, to her great embarrassment, shame and worry.

Then came the Lord's reassurance: "Only one of two things can happen. Either your friends will speak ill of you or praise Me."

Then came the realization that she, who delighted to see God revealing Himself in others, must also take delight in God revealing Himself in her!

This is a long, slow process, the Way of Perfection. She was learning that it takes more courage to follow this Way than the Way of sudden martyrdom, as had happened to so many of the Saints she adored. Perfection cannot be obtained quickly, but must be nourished, protected and encouraged to grow, like the Christ-child in the heart. Like the Christian martyrs, she wanted to destroy her body; but she found herself still in it, regardless of how much she tried to trample it beneath her feet. Her great suffering forced her to keep her attention on the physical world and the demands of her body, regardless of how much she wanted to escape it into that Boundless Love that is the Christ.

The Tree of Life of the Western Mystery Tradition may help the reader and student to differentiate between Theresa's confusing use of the terms: God, the Lord, Jesus, the Christ, etc.



**You will note three pillars on the Tree. The Middle Pillar**

of the Tree is the Way of Perfection, the shortest and roughest Way of all. To the student or devotee in the flesh, looking up that Way from the tomb of the body and its five senses at the Sacrificed God, the founder of his faith, that martyr is God; and he or she needs no other image of deity, to help roll away the stone.

This is Lesson Nine of our Invisible Reality Series on the Kabala of the Western Mystery Tradition as we see it. A review of Lesson Two, the "Three Paths for Man", will refresh your memory on the differences between the Pagan, the Mystic and the Hermetic scientist. Each type has his or her own Master; for Theresa it was Jesus the Christ, or the Lord, as she called him. A Christian occultist would call him Lord of Lords! But time, and her untiring devotions and service gradually revealed something of the structure of the higher worlds to her.

One powerful vision of the negative forces surrounding man and woman, and by use of which the Creator moves his universe forward, was of Theresa finding herself in a field. She was surrounded by menacing people on all sides. They were armed and threatening her. There was no escape.

Then far above her in the air she saw the Lord. His hands were outstretched toward her, encouraging her to hold her ground. He protected her from harm and removed her fear.

Later, when she was founding her Houses and found herself in just such situations, attacked on every side, she had good cause to remember that wonderful vision of support and protection. The memory of it must have thrilled her through and through as she made her toilsome way through a world in which everyone could turn on one poor soul.

The worst persecutions she ever had came from her own townspeople; but the Lord's support was there. Someone was always available to hold out a helping hand. Her Teacher told her we are never safe as long as we are in the flesh. She was made to realize how much worse things could be without His support! She also learned that He would never abandon His disciples, but that they must do everything they can to help themselves.

#### A GLIMPSE OF GOD THE FATHER, KETHER

During one Communion service she once did pierce the Veil behind the Christ. It was as though the doors of heaven were thrown wide open to her. There was the throne; but above it was another throne on which the God-head sat -- or so she understood; but she could not see it clearly. If she had, the blast of Light would have taken her out of her body completely, for good. Remember Enoch, who saw God and was not? She writes that the exper-

ience is inconceivable to anyone who has not felt and seen it. To her the whole world seemed but an anthill afterward. She was in a state of rapture for two hours without realizing it. Time was not. The mechanicalness of habit took her through the Mass.

#### BINAH, THE FEMININE ASPECT OF CREATION

Another great vision was that of Mary as Queen of the Angels. This came to her at the Feast of the Assumption of our Lady, which celebrates Her becoming Queen of the Angels. Theresa saw Her ascent into heaven and the joy and solemnity with which She was received. There was also an understanding of Mary's work with pregnant women all over the world. This increased Theresa's desire to serve Her.

This vision of visions brought her to Truth itself. All other truths depended on this one Truth. All other loves depended on this one Love. All other greatnesses, or powers, depended on this one Greatness, or Power. It came while she was recollecting a previous experience of hell. Fire poured into her soul and brought on a great rapture and clear locution from the Lord.

"This is no small thing that I am doing for you, but one of those things for which you are greatly indebted to Me. For all the harm that befalls the world comes from a failure to understand the truths of Scripture in all their true clarity, of which not one tittle shall fail."

Theresa had always thought that all the true faithful believed this.

"Ah, daughter, how few there are that truly love Me; for if they did so I would not hide my secrets from them! Do you know what it is to love me truly? It is to know that everything which is not pleasing to Me is a lie. You do not realize this yet, but you will come to see it clearly in the profit it brings to your soul."

This special grace gave Theresa great fortitude to carry out the smallest injunction of Holy Scripture with all her might, as she understood it.

An ambitious cleric asked her to discover if he should accept a bishopric. Fortune-telling in the Church? Of course! The locution that came to her in reply was: "Tell him that when he truly and clearly understands that true dominion consists in possessing nothing, then he can accept it."

Living in the world thus became very painful to her; for she wanted to speak only the most profound truths; but the world, her world, kept demanding practical solutions to everyday problems.



But she was filled with tenderness and joy, and the necessary humility to carry out her obligations.

Another great vision was that of seeing Christ as in a mirror. It was a very bright image. It came while she was reciting the Office with the community. The locution or message that came with the vision was that the mirror is covered with mist when the soul is in mortal sin. In the case of heretics the mirror is badly cracked.

Her observation that the mirror-image is in the innermost part of the soul indicates to us that she was beginning to realize that the Christ was her own Higher Self, her own God in the microcosm, linking her up with God in the macrocosm.

She was so happy in her enclosed convent of St. Joseph's, well out of the world, in a small and saintly society, caring more about a single soul's advancement than in what people said about her. She achieved a high level of consciousness in which all life was a dream in which there was neither happiness or unhappiness. The Lord had awakened her from sleep and would not let her become blind again.

The Truth of Matthew 13:15 had been made plain to her:

"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing; and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Many more years of active and worldly effort lay before her. She was to establish many more enclosed convents, against great opposition, sixteen in all, each one a reproach to the greed for power and money, the worldliness, of the Church's bishops and cardinals. She was also to write two more books. "The Foundations" was the story of the founding of her houses. "The Interior Castle" -- or The Mansions -- is an analysis of her Four Waters of prayer and the Seven States of Grace.

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