

The Mirror of Simple Souls
By Marguerite Porete

Chapter 5. Of that life which is called the peace of charity in a life brought to nothing

Love. This book which says that this Soul has six wings, just as the Seraphim, has indeed spoken truly of her. With two wings she hides her face from Jesus Christ our Lord. That is to say that the more that she knows nothing of it, compared with one single spark of his goodness, for God is not comprehended except by himself alone.

With the next two wings she covers her feet. That is so say that the more she knows of what Jesus Christ suffered for us, the more perfectly she knows that she knows nothing of it, compared with what he did suffer for us, for he is not known except by himself alone. With the other two wings the Soul flies, and in the air she both hovers and takes her rest. That is to say that the wings with which she flies are all that she knows and loves and praises of God's goodness; and she hovers for she is always in God's sight; and she is at rest, for she dwells always in the divine will.

Chapter 12. The true meaning of what this book says in many places, that the Soul brought to Nothing has no will at all.

Love. The ninth point, Lady Reason, says Love, is that this Soul has no will at all.

Reason. Ah, for the love of the God of love, says Reason, what are you saying? Are you saying that this Soul has no will at all?

Love. Ah, truly, no. For everything which she wills by her consent is that which God wills that she should will, and this she wills so that the will of God may be accomplished, not at all her own will; and she cannot will this of herself, but it is the will of God which wills it in her; and so it is clear that this Soul has no will at all that she has to will.

Chapter 18. How such creatures do not know how to say any- thing about God.

The Soul. Such creatures can no longer say anything about God, for they can no more say who God is than where he is. For whoever speaks of God, when and to whom and where he pleases, must never doubt but must know beyond doubt, says this Soul, that he never once tasted the real kernel of divine Love, which in all men, truly, once tasted, robs the Soul forever of her senses without her knowing it. For this is the true and pure kernel of divine Love, in which there is no created matter, and it is given to the creature by the Creator; and it is the custom of such Souls to comprehend much and to forget it quickly, so subtle in his dealings is he who loves them.

Chapter 21. Love replies to Reason's objection, because this book says that such Souls take leave of the Virtues.

Reason. Now, Love, says Reason, I have still another question to put to you; for this book says that this Soul takes leave of the Virtues in all matters, and you say that the Virtues are always

with such Souls, more perfectly than with anyone else. These are two contradictory statements, it seems to me, says Reason; I cannot understand them.

Love. I shall set your mind at rest, says Love. It is true that this Soul has taken leave of the Virtues, in that she does not use them, and does not long for what they require, but the Virtues have not taken leave of such Souls, for they are always with them, but they are in perfect obedience to such Souls. It is in this sense that this Soul takes leave of them, and that yet they are always with them. For if a man serves a master, he belongs to him whom he serves, but his master does not belong to him; and it can sometimes happen that this servant earns and learns so much from his master that he becomes richer and wiser than his master, so that this servant leaves his master to find someone better; and when he who was his master sees for certain that his former serving-man is worth more and knows more than he does himself, he goes to dwell with him, to obey him in all things. You can and must understand that it is just so with the Virtues and such Souls; because at the beginning this Soul did everything which Reason indicated to her, whatever it cost her in heart and body, when Reason was her mistress, and Reason always said to her that she should do everything which the Virtues wished without demur, though it cost her her life. So Reason and the other Virtues were the mistresses of this Soul, and this Soul was truly obedient in all that they wished to command, because she wanted to live the life of the spirit. But now it has come about that this Soul has earned and learned so much from the Virtues that she is above them, for she has within her every- thing which the Virtues are able to teach, and infinitely more, for this Soul has within her the mistress of the Virtues who is called Divine Love, who has wholly changed the Soul into herself and united her to herself, so that this Soul no more belongs to herself or to the Virtues.

Reason. To whom, then, does she belong? says Reason.

Love. To my will, says Love, who have changed her into me.

Reason. And who are you, Love? says Reason. Are you not also one of the Virtues, and one of us, even though you be above us?

Love. I am God, says Love, for Love is God, and God is Love, and this Soul is God through its condition of Love, and I am God through my divine nature, and this Soul is God by Love's just law. So that this my precious beloved is taught and guided by me, without herself for she has been changed into me. And this is the outcome, says Love, of being nourished by me.