

CHRIST'S GREATEST SERMON AND CONVERSION

Imprimatur for English edition:

1999 Bishop Roman Danylak (see below Appendix)

[Pope Pius XII's often-quoted declaration was: "Publish this work as it is. There is no need to give an opinion on its origin, whether it be extraordinary or not. Whoever reads it will understand. (These days) we hear of so many visions and revelations. I am not saying that all of them would be true, but there are some of them that are authentic".]



Extracts from "[The Poem of the Man-God](#)" by Maria Valtorta (approved by Pope Pius XII, 1948)

Scholar-Saint recommends Maria Valtorta, who... "in less than four years writes a Work of 10 volumes in which she brings to life again the religious, political and cultural ambient of the first century, and what frightens the specialists themselves all the more, she recounts in proper order--but this order is recognized and established after the visions have ceased--she recounts in proper order the life of Christ, completing the Gospels without ever contradicting them." **Blessed Gabriel Allegra** (see Appendix below)

With the 1991 publication of the 5th volume of [The Poem of the Man-God](#), Masterwork of the modern Italian mystic, Maria Valtorta [1897-1961†], the English translation is now complete and is rapidly being disseminated and acclaimed in the western hemisphere, especially among the Laity. Many, indeed, who have read it with an open mind and solid commitment hail it as a singular gift of Divine Mercy to modern man and the Church of our times. The **Poem** is a voluminous Life of Christ and His Mother which Valtorta affirms was revealed to her in Visions given her by Christ. It also contains random Commentaries on these Visions, dictated by Christ or Mary. Essentially, then, it is **the gospel**, but considerably amplified, "fleshed out" with all the details and personages that doubtless initially accompanied the basic skeletal synopsis handed down to us in the New Testament.

Though Valtorta's great Work only began to be known on the Western hemisphere with the appearance of the first English volume in 1987, both she and her Poem have been known for some time in Europe. Indeed, the first preliminary publication was brought out by Pisani Editions as far back as 1956, and the ten-volume Work is now in its third critical Italian edition. In 1970, Pisani also began to publish in Italian a semiannual "Valtorta Bulletin" [Bollettino Valtortiano] for readers of Valtorta's Work. The Bulletin discusses various points or questions about the Work, while also documenting the reactions and evaluations of scholars, scientists, and ecclesiastics who have read it. Not surprisingly, though, the scientific attitude of modern man, and hence of most scholars and ecclesiastics today, spawns in them an abrupt closure and extreme distrust toward any such Work as this claiming "private revelations" as its source. See the appendix below by Fr. Most on Private Revelations.

Given the wide acclaim that Valtorta's Poem has generated, however, both in Europe and now increasingly in our western hemisphere, the scientism pervading academia in the Church today quickly raises the inevitable question: "What would modern biblical scholarship say of this Work? How would a modern exegete Judge it?" But in the face of this pervasive rationalism in ecclesiastical academia today, it would be rare indeed to find a modern biblical scholar who would condescend to give a passing glance to or even browse through a Work of this nature. Nonetheless, in 1952, before the Poem's initial publication, Father (later Cardinal) Augustine Bea, S.J., Rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, did willingly read several fascicles of Valtorta's original typescript of the Work and commented:

...As to the exegesis, I have found no prominent errors in the fascicles I examined. I had also been much impressed by the fact that the archeological and topographical descriptions are set forth with much exactness.... Generally speaking, the reading of the Work is not only interesting and pleasing, but truly edifying and, for people less well informed on the mystery of the life of Jesus, instructive. [Bollettino Valtortiano, No. 19, June 1979, page 75].

Nicholas Pende :

The first to define Valtorta's work as a "masterwork" was the illustrious [medical] clinician, [Dr.] Nicholas Pende, who wrote:

"...for me, it is a true masterwork both from the aspect of its style as from the beauty of its language and form."

lingering then on one detail, [he says]:

"...What has aroused in me, a physician, the greatest admiration—and amazement for the expertise with which Valtorta describes a phenomenology which only a few consummate physicians would know how to explain—is the scene of the agony of Jesus on the cross... Pity and the greatest emotion invade the Christian reader on reading this astonishing page, with its truly medical style, of Maria Valtorta's manuscript."

Pende's statement forms part of the historical endorsements of 1952. In that year the Work was not yet published, but was available in typewritten fascicles which learned and authoritative persons read, later on recording their own impressions. These are integrally related in the book *Pro e contro Maria Valtorta*. From those famous endorsements, let us take some other passages:

Archbp. Alphonsus Carinci:

"...it seems impossible to me that a woman of a very ordinary theological culture, and unprovided with any book useful to that end, had been able on her own to write with such exactness pages so sublime." [Archbishop Alphonsus Carinci: then Secretary of the Congregation of Rites, which was later called the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints]

Camillus Corsánego:

"...I have never found [such] an ensemble of science, of art, of piety and of adherence to the traditional teachings of the Church as in the Work on the Gospels of Signora Maria Valtorta." [Camillus Corsánego: then dean of the consistorial advocates, and professor at the Pontifical Lateran University.]

George La Pira:

"...there are no theological improprieties, and it is a matter of very singular interest." [George La Pira: university professor, deputy and mayor of Florence, now "Servant of God"].

Msgr. Hugo Lattanzi:

"...these are truly splendid pages both in thought and in form; descriptions of psychological situations worthy of Shakespeare, dialogs conducted in a Socratic manner worthy of Plato, and descriptions of nature and the environment worthy of the most imaginative writer." [Msgr. Hugo Lattanzi: Professor of fundamental theology at the Lateran Pontifical University].

Msgr. Angelo Mercati:

"...I well remember the very good impression that remained with me from the reading of the hundreds of different pages communicated to me..." [Msgr. Angelo Mercati: Prefect of the Vatican Secret Archive].

Msgr. Maurice Raffa:

"...I found therein incomparable riches...Wanting to express a judgment on its intrinsic and aesthetic value, I point out that to write just one of the many volumes composing the Work, it would need an Author (who today does not exist) who would be at once a great poet, an able biblical scholar, a profound theologian, an expert in archeology and topography, and a profound connoisseur of human psychology."

[Msgr. Maurice Raffa: Director of the International Center of Comparison and Synthesis]

Professor Vittorio Tredici:

"...From a critical angle, what struck me most profoundly in the Work, was the perfect knowledge which the writer had of Palestine and the Places where the Preaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ unfolded. A knowledge which in so many passages surpasses normal geographic or panoramic knowledge, directly becoming topographical and, still more, geological and mineralogical knowledge." [Professor Vittorio Tredici, mineralogist]

In line with these 1952 endorsements of which we have reported some passages, there is a letter from Giuseppe Cardinal Siri, archbishop of Genoa, who, on the date of March 6, 1956, expressed himself thus:

Giuseppe Cardinal Siri:

"...my impression from reading the typescript is excellent... I would willingly read some more. A larger volume would further substantiate a judgment, even if it be modest as mine."

In the same year, 1956, the first printed volume of the Work² appeared and began its diffusion, which has never been interrupted.

In 1973, the illustrious Mariologist, Gabriel M. Roschini, O.S.V., expressed himself thus:

"...the Mariology that emerges from the writings of Maria Valtorta has been for me a true revelation. No other Marian writer, and not even the sum total of Marian writings that I have read and studied, had been able to give me so clear, so living, so complete, so luminous and so fascinating an idea — simple and yet sublime — of God's Masterwork [Mary]."

One of the greatest philosophers of our day, Cornelius Fabro, in a letter of 1979, spoke of [Valtorta's *Poem*] as **"a spiritual work and style among the most singular in the contemporary Church for renewing, from within, our faith and love of the Redeemer of the world;"**

and in another letter of 1981 he noted:

"...having to live amid philosophical aridity, this reading opens for me a gleam of light even in our time of agony of spirit."

169. The Sermon of the Mount: "You Are the Salt of the Earth.

Seen 22nd May 1945

¹Jesus is walking fast along a main road. He is alone. He is going towards a mountain, which rises near a main road running eastwards from the lake, and it begins to rise with a low mild elevation which extends for a good distance, forming a tableland from which one can see all the lake and the form of Tigerish towards the south, as well as other towns, not quite so beautiful, stretching towards the north. There is then a crag and the mountain rises rather steeply up to a peak, and then slopes down and rises once again up to another peak, similar to the previous one, thus forming a kind of strange saddle.

Jesus begins climbing towards the tableland along a mule-track, which is still quite comfortable, and reaches a small village, the inhabitants of which work the tableland, where the corn is beginning to come to ear. He goes through the village and proceeds through the fields and meadows all strewn with flowers and rustling with crops.

The clear day displays all the beauty of the surrounding nature. Besides the lonely little mountain, towards which Jesus is going, to the north lies the imposing peak of Mount Hereon, the top of which looks like a huge pearl laid on a base of emeralds, so white is the peak covered with snow, whereas the woody slope is green. Beyond the lake, which is between the lake and Mount Hereon, the plain is green. Lake Merom is there, but cannot be seen from here. There are more mountains towards the lake of Tigerish on the north-wise side and beyond the lake there is a lovely flat country and other mountains, the contours of which are softened by the distance. To the south, on the other side of the main road, I can see the hills, which I think conceal Nazareth. The more one climbs, the wider the view. I cannot see what lies to the west, because the mountain acts as a wall.

²Jesus meets first the apostle Philip, who seems to have been posted there as sentinel. "What, Master? You are here? We were expecting to meet You on the main road. I am waiting here for my companions who have gone to get some milk from the shepherds who pasture their flocks on these mountains. Down, on the road, there is Simon with Judas of Simon and Isaac, and... Oh! here... Come! Come! The Master is here!"

The apostles, who are coming down with flasks and containers, begin to run and the younger ones, of course, arrive first. The welcome they give the Master is really touching. At last they are all together and while Jesus smiles, they all want to speak and tell Him...

"But we were waiting for You on the road!"

"We were just thinking that You were not coming even today."

"You know, there are many people."

"Oh! We were embarrassed, there are some scribes and even some of Gamaliel's disciples..."

"That's right, my Lord! You left us just at the right moment! I have never been so afraid as I was just then. Don't play such a trick on me again!"

Peter complains and Jesus smiles and asks: "Did anything wrong happen to you?"

"Oh! no! On the contrary... Oh! Master! Don't You know that John gave a sermon?... It sounded as if You were speaking through him. I... we were all dumbfounded... That boy who only a year ago was able only to cast a net... oh!" Peter is still amazed and he shakes John who smiles but is silent. "Do you believe that it is possible that this boy spoke those words with these smiling lips? He sounded like Solomon."

"Also Simon spoke very well, my Lord. He was really 'the chief'" says John.

"No wonder! He took me and pushed me there! Who knows!... They say that I gave a good sermon. Perhaps I did. I don't know... because what with the surprise at John's words, what with the fear of speaking to so many people and causing You to cut a poor figure, I was bewildered..."

"Causing Me to cut a poor figure? But you were speaking and you would have cut a poor figure, Simon" teases Jesus.

"Oh! As far as I am concerned... I was not worried about myself. I did not want them to sneer at You and consider You a fool for choosing a blockhead as your apostle."

Jesus sparkles with joy because of Peter's humility and love. But He only asks: "And what about the others?"

"Also the Zealot spoke very well. But he... we all know. But this boy was the great surprise! Of course, since we retired to pray, the boy's soul seems to be in Heaven all the time."

"That is true, very true." They all confirm Peter's words. And they continue telling Jesus...

"You know? Among the disciples now there are two, who according to Judas of Simon, are very important. Judas is very active. Of course! He knows many of those... high up and knows how to deal with them. And he likes to speak... He speaks very well. But the people prefer to hear Simon, Your cousins and above all this boy. Yesterday a man said to me: "That young man speaks very well - he was referring to Judas - but I prefer you." Oh! poor fellow! He prefers me and I can hardly put a few words together!... But why did You come here? The meeting place was the road, and we have been there."

"Because I knew I was going to find you here. Now listen. Go down and tell the others to come up, also the known disciples. The people are not to come today. I want to speak to you only."

"In that case it is better to wait until evening. When the sun is about to set, the people spread among the nearby villages and they come back the following morning waiting for You. Otherwise... who will hold them back?"

"All right. Do that. I will wait for you up there, at the top. The nights are mild now and we can sleep in the open."

"Wherever You wish, Master. Providing You are with us."

³The disciples go away and Jesus resumes climbing up to the top, which is the same one as I already saw last year in the vision for the end of the sermon of the Mount and the first meeting with Mary Magdalene. The view is now wider and is becoming brighter in the sunset.

Jesus sits on a rock and is recollected in meditation. And He remains thus until the shuffling of feet on the path warns Him that the apostles are back. It is getting dark, but the sun still shines on the mountain top, drawing scents from every herb and flower... There is a strong smell of wild lilies of the valley while the tall stems of narcissi shake their stars and buds as if they were asking for dew.

Jesus gets up and greets them: "Peace be with you."

There are many disciples who come up with the apostles. Isaac leads them smiling. His smiling face is the thin face of an ascetic. They all gather round Jesus Who is greeting Judas Iscariot and Simon Zealot particularly.

"I wanted you all here with Me, to be for a few hours with you alone and speak only to you. I have something to tell you to prepare you for your mission. Let us take our food and then we shall speak, and while you are sleeping your souls will continue to relish the doctrine."

They have their frugal meal and then form a circle round Jesus Who is sitting on a large stone. They are about one hundred, perhaps more, between disciples and apostles: a circle of attentive faces, which the flames of two fires light up oddly. Jesus speaks slowly, gesticulating quietly. His face looks paler, as it merges from His dark blue tunic and also because it is lit up by the rays of the new moon, which illuminates the spot where He is, a small comma of a moon in the sky, a ray of light that caresses the Master of Heaven and earth.

⁴"I wanted you here, aside, because you are My friends. I called you together after the first test of the Twelve, to widen the circle of My active disciples, and to hear from you your first reactions to being guided by those whom I am giving to you to continue My work. I know that everything went well. I supported with My prayer the souls of the apostles, who had come out of a praying retreat with a new strength in their minds and in their hearts. A strength that does not come from human effort, but from a complete reliance in God.

Those who have been most unmindful of themselves, have given most. It is difficult to be unmindful of oneself.

Man is made of recollections and the ones that raise their voice most are the memories of one's *ego*. You must distinguish between *ego* and *ego*. There is the spiritual *ego* of the soul that remembers God and its origin from God, and there is the inferior *ego* of the flesh that remembers its passions and the numberless exigencies concerning its whole being. They are so many voices as to form a choir, and unless the spirit is quite strong, they overcome the solitary voice of the spirit that remembers its nobility as child of God. It is therefore necessary - with the exception of this holy memory that should always be stimulated and kept green and bright - it is necessary to learn how to forget yourselves, in all the memories, the needs, the timid reflections of the human *ego*, in order to be perfect disciples.

In this first test of My Twelve, those who have given most are the ones who forgot themselves most. They forgot not only their past, but also their limited personality. They are the ones who no longer remembered what they were, and were so united to God as to be afraid of nothing. Why were some stand-offish? Because they remembered their habitual scruples, their usual considerations and prejudice. Why were others laconic? Because they remembered their doctrinal inability and they were afraid of cutting a bad figure or causing Me to cut one. Why the showy ostentation of others? Because they remembered their usual pride, their desire to show off, to be applauded, to rise above the others, to be "someone". Finally, why the sudden revelation of a triumphal, rabbinic, persuasive, firm eloquence in others? Because they, and they alone did remember God. Like those who so far have been humble and have endeavoured to pass unnoticed and at the right moment were able, all of a sudden, to assume the pre-eminent dignity conferred on them, and which they never wanted to exert before, lest they should presume too much. The first three groups remembered their inferior *ego*. The other group, the fourth, remembered with their superior *ego* and were not afraid. They felt God with themselves and in themselves and were not afraid. Oh! holy boldness which comes from being with God!

⁵Therefore now listen, both you apostles and you disciples. You apostles have already heard these concepts. But now you will understand them in greater depth. You disciples have never heard of them or you have only heard fragments of them. And you must engrave them on your hearts. Because I will make a wider and wider use of you, as Christ's flock is becoming more and more numerous. Because the world will attack you more and more violently, and its wolves will increase in number against Me, the Shepherd and against the flock and I want to put in your hands the weapons to defend both the Doctrine and My flock. What is sufficient for the herd is not sufficient for you, little shepherds. If the sheep are allowed to make mistakes, browsing in herbs which make the blood bitter or desires crazy, you are not allowed to make the same mistakes, leading a large herd to ruin. Because you must realise that where there is an idolatrous shepherd the sheep either die of poison or are devoured by wolves.

You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. But should you fail in your mission you would become a tasteless and useless salt. Nothing could give you flavour again, since God could not give you it, considering that it was given to you as a gift, and you have desalted it, by washing it in the insipid dirty water of mankind, by sweetening it by means of the corrupt sweetness of sensuality, thus mixing with the pure salt of God the corruption of pride, avarice, gluttony, lust, wrath, sloth, so that there is a grain of salt to seven times seven grains of each vice. Your salt, therefore, is but a mixture of stones in which the poor grain of lost salt cannot be found, a mixture of stones screeching under your teeth and leaving in your mouths the flavour of earth, that makes food disagreeable and disgusting. It is not even useful for inferior use, as the flavour of the seven vices would harm also every human employment. The salt then can only be spread and trodden on by the careless feet of the people. How many people will thus be able to tread heavily on the men of God! Because those chosen men will allow the careless people to trample on them, as they no longer are a substance employed to give the flavour of noble heavenly things, as they are nothing but *corruption*.

You are the light of the world. You are like this mountain top which was the last to be kissed by the sun and the first to be silvered by the moon. Who is in a high place shines and can be seen because even the most dreamy eye looks now and again at high spots. I would say that the physical eye, which is said to be the mirror of the soul, reflects the yearnings of the soul, a yearning often unnoticed but always alive as long as a man is not a demon, a yearning after heights where reason by instinct places the Most High. And searching for Heaven, at least some times in life the eye looks at heights.

I beg you to remember what we all have done, since our childhood, entering Jerusalem. Where do our eyes turn? To Mount Moriah, triumphantly crowned with the marbles and gold of the Temple. And where do we turn our eyes when we are in the enclosure of the Temple? We look at the precious domes shining in the sun. How much beauty there is in the sacred enclosure, spread in its halls, porches and yards! But what is up there strikes our eyes. I also beg you to remember what happens when we are on the way to some place. Where do we turn our eyes, almost to forget the length of the journey, the tedium, the tiredness, the heat, the dust of the road? They turn to the mountain tops, even if they are not very high, even if they are far away. And

what a relief it is to see them appear if we are walking in a flat unvarying plain! Is there mud on the road? There is neatness up there. Is it sultry on the plain? It is cool up there. Is the view limited down here? It is wide up there. And only by looking at the mountain tops, we feel less of the heat of the day, the mud is not so slippery, and walking is not so painful. If there is a town shining on the mountain top, no eye will refrain from admiring it. We could say that even a modest place becomes beautiful if placed, when possible, on high spots, and if there was no hill or mountain, they built a stone pedestal, thus building with human labour the elevation on which to lay the temple. Why is that done? Because men want the temple to be seen so that its sight will remind mankind of God.

Likewise I said that you are lights. When in the evening you light a lamp in the house, where do you put it? In a hole under the oven? In the cave used as a cellar? Or do you close it in a chest? Or do you hide it under a bushel? No, you do not. Otherwise it would be useless lighting it. The light instead is placed on top of a shelf, or it is put on a lamp-stand, so that being high up, it may brighten up the whole room and illuminate the people living in it. And precisely because what is placed on a high place is to remind men of God and illuminate, it must be able to fulfil its task.

⁶You must remember the True God. Thus you must ensure that you do not have within yourselves the sevenfold paganism. Otherwise you would become profane high places with thickets sacred to this or to that god, and you would drag into your paganism those who look at you as the temples of God. You must bear the light of God. A dirty wick, a wick not nourished with oil, smokes and gives no light, it has a bad smell and does not illuminate. A lamp hidden behind a dirty quartz-crystal does not create the splendid gracefulness or the dazzling effects of light on the bright mineral. But it fades behind the veil of black smoke that makes the crystal cover dull.

The light of God shines where wills are zealous in removing daily the scum produced by work itself, with its contacts, reactions and disappointments. The light of God shines where the wick is immersed into plenty liquid of prayer and charity. The light of God multiplies into infinite splendid reflections, as many as the perfections of God, each of which excites in the saint a virtue practised heroically, if the servant of God keeps the unattackable quartz of his soul clear from the smoke of every soiling passion. The unattackable quartz. Unattackable! (Jesus thunders out in this conclusion and His voice resounds in the natural amphitheatre).

Only God has the right and the power to scratch that crystal, to write His Most Holy Name on it with the diamond of His will. That Name then becomes the ornament that emphasizes the brighter facets of supernatural beauty on the most pure quartz. But if the foolish servant of the Lord, losing control of himself and the sight of his mission, *a completely and solely supernatural one*, allows false ornaments and scratches, instead of engravings to be cut on his quartz, that is, mysterious and satanic figures made by the hot claw of Satan, then the wonderful lamp no longer retains its intact beauty, but it cracks and breaks and the fragments of the splintered crystal suffocate the flame, and even if it does not break, a tangle of marks of unmistakable nature forms on its surface and soot penetrates into them spoiling it.

Woe, three times woe, to the shepherds who lose charity, who refuse to climb day by day to take upwards their flocks that expect their ascent in order to ascend themselves. I will strike them down and remove them from their positions and I will put out their smoke altogether.

Woe, three times woe, to the masters, who reject Wisdom to become saturated with a science, which is often opposed and always proud, sometimes satanic, because it makes them men, whereas - listen and remember - if every man is destined to become like God, through the sanctification that makes man a son of God, a master, a priest should already have in this world the aspect of a son of God, and only such aspect. He should have the aspect of a creature entirely devoted to souls and to perfection. *He should have* such aspect to lead his disciples to God. Anathema to the masters of a supernatural doctrine, who become idols of human knowledge.

Woe, seven times woe, to those among My priests who are dead to the spirit, who with their lack of savour and ill-living flesh live as miserable sluggish human beings. Their sleep is full of hallucinated apparitions of everything, except God One and Triune, and is full as well of all sorts of calculations, except the superhuman desire to increase the wealth of hearts and of God; they live a material, miserable dull life, dragging into their dead water those who follow them, believing that they are "Life". The curse of God on those who corrupt My little beloved flock. I shall not ask an account and I will not punish those who perish through your laziness, or negligent servants of the Lord, but I will ask you to account for every hour and all the time lost and all evil consequences and I will punish you.

⁷Remember those words. And now go. I am climbing to the top. You may sleep. Tomorrow the Shepherd will open the pastures of Truth to His flock."

170. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part One).

24th May 1945

¹Jesus speaks to the apostles allotting a place to each one, so that they may direct and watch over the crowd who are climbing up the mountain since the early hours in the morning, with sick people whom they carry in their arms or in stretchers or who have dragged themselves along on crutches. Among the people there are Stephen and Hermas.

The air is clear and rather chilly, but the sun soon softens the fresh mountain air, which on its turn, moderates the heat of the sun, drawing benefit from it, as it becomes pure and cool but not sharp.

The people sit on the stones scattered in the little valley between the two crests, but some wait for the sun to dry the grass, wet with dew, so that they may sit down on the earth. There is a huge crowd from all the districts in Palestine and the people are of all conditions. The apostles disappear in the multitude, but like bees that come and go from the meadows to the beehives, now and again they go back to the Master to inform Him, to ask for advice, and for the pleasure of being seen near Him.

Jesus climbs a little higher up than the meadow, which is at the bottom of the little valley. He leans against the rock and begins speaking.

²Many have asked Me, during a year of preaching: "You say that You are the Son of God, tell us what is Heaven, what is the Kingdom, what is God. Because our notions are hazy. We know that there is Heaven with God and the angels. But no one has ever come to tell us what it is like, because it is closed to righteous people". They have also asked Me what the Kingdom is and what God is. And I have endeavoured to explain to you what the Kingdom is and what God is. I have striven not because it was difficult for Me to give an explanation, but because it is difficult for many reasons to get you to accept the truth that clashes, as far as the Kingdom is concerned, with a multitude of ideas, which have risen over the centuries and, as far as God is concerned, with the sublimity of His Nature.

Others have also asked Me: "All right. That is the Kingdom and that is God. But how do we achieve them?" Here again I have tried to explain to you patiently the true spirit of the Law of Sinai. Who abides by that spirit conquers Heaven. But to explain the Law of Sinai to you it is necessary to make you hear the loud thunder of the Law-giver and of His Prophet, who, while promising blessings to obedient believers, threaten terrible punishments and maledictions to those who disobey. The Epiphany of Sinai was frightful and its dreadfulness is reflected in the entire Law, and has been reflected throughout centuries and in all souls.

But God is not only a Legislator... God is a Father. And a Father of immense goodness.

Probably, nay, certainly, your souls are not in a position to rise and contemplate the infinite perfections of God, and His goodness least of all, because goodness and love are the rarest virtues amongst men. The reason is that your souls are weakened by original sin, by passions, by your own sins, by your own selfishness and the selfishness of other people: the former closes your souls, the latter irritates them. Goodness! How sweet it is to be good, with no hatred, no envy, no pride! How sweet it is to have eyes that look only for love and hands that stretch out only in gestures of love, and lips that utter only words of love and a heart, above all a heart, that full only of love, urges eyes, hands and lips to acts of love!

³The most learned amongst you know with which gifts God had enriched Adam, both for himself and for his descendants. Also the most ignorant amongst the children of Israel know that there is a soul in us. Only the poor heathens are unaware of this royal guest, of this vital breath and celestial light that sanctifies and gives life to our body. But the most learned know which gifts were given to man and to the soul of man.

God was not less munificent to the soul than to the flesh and blood of the creature made by Him with a little mud and His breath. As He gave the natural gifts of beauty and integrity, of intelligence and will power, and the capability of loving oneself and other people, He also gave moral gifts and the subjection of senses to reason. Therefore the wicked captivity of senses and passions did not permeate the freedom and control of Adam and of his will with which God had gifted him, thus he was free to love, free to wish, free to enjoy in justice, without what makes you slaves, causing you to feel the bite of the poison that Satan spread and which now overflows, carrying you out of the limpid river-bed on to the slimy fields and putrescent ponds, where the fever of carnal and moral senses fermentates. Because you must realise that also the concupiscence of thought is sensual. And they received super-natural gifts, that is, sanctifying Grace, a heavenly destiny, the vision of God.

⁴Sanctifying Grace: the life of the soul. The most spiritual thing deposited in our spiritual soul. The grace that makes us children of God, because it preserves us from the death of sin, and who is not dead "lives" in the house of the Father: Paradise; in My Kingdom; Heaven. What is this Grace that sanctifies and gives Life and Kingdom? Oh! Not many words are required! Grace is love. Grace is therefore God. It is God Who admiring Himself in the creature whom He created perfect, loves Himself, contemplates Himself, desires Himself, gives Himself what is His own to multiply it, to delight in the multiplication, to love Himself in the many others who are others Himself.

Oh! My children! Do not defraud God of this right of His! Do not deprive God of what belongs to Him! Do not disappoint God in His desire! Consider that He acts out of love. Even if you did not exist, He would still be Infinite, and His power would not diminish. But He, although He is complete in His infinite immeasurable measure, does not want anything for Himself and in Himself - which He could not, because He is already Infinite - but for Creation, His creature. He wants to increase His love for all rational creatures contained in Creation, and therefore gives you His Grace: Love, that you may carry it in yourselves to the perfection of saints, and you may pour this treasure, taken from the treasure that God has given you with His Grace and increased by all the holy deeds in all your heroic lives of saints, into the infinite Ocean where God is: into Heaven.

You are divine reservoirs of Love! That is what you are, and no death is given to your being, because you are eternal, as God is, being like God. You shall be, and there will be no end to your being, because you are immortal like the holy spirits that super-nourished you, returning to you enriched by their own merits. You live and nourish, you live and enrich, you live and form the most holy thing which is the Communion of the spirits, from God, the Most Perfect Spirit, down to the last born baby, who sucks his mother's breast for the first time.

Do not criticise Me in your hearts, o learned men! Do not say: "He is crazy, He is a liar! Because He speaks foolishly saying that there is Grace in us, when Sin has deprived us of it. He lies stating that we are already one thing with God". Yes, there is sin and there is separation. But before the power of the Redeemer, Sin, the cruel separation between the Father and the children, will collapse like a wall shaken by a new Samson. I have already got hold of it and I am shaking it and it is about to fall and Satan is trembling with wrath and impotence, as he can avail nothing against My power and he realises that so much prey is being snatched from him and that it is becoming more difficult to drag man to sin. Because when I will have taken you to My Father, through Me, and you have been cleansed and strengthened by My Blood and sorrow, Grace will come back to you, lively and powerful and you will be triumphant, if you so wish. God does no violence to your thoughts or your sanctification. You are free. But He gives you back your strength. He gives you back your freedom from Satan's empire. It is up to you to take upon yourselves the infernal yoke or to put angelical wings on your souls. It depends on you, with Me as your brother to guide you and nourish you with an immortal food.

⁵You may ask: "How can one conquer God and His Kingdom through a milder road than the harsh Sinai one?" There is no other road but that one. But let us look at it not from the point of view of a threat, but from the point of view of love. Let us not say: "Woe to me, if I do not do that!" trembling with fear of sinning, of not being able not to sin. But let us say: "How glad I will be if I do that!" and with the impulse of a supernatural joy, full of happiness, let us rush towards these beatitudes, brought about by compliance with the Law, as roses sprout from a thorny bush.

"How blessed I will be if I am poor in spirit, because mine shall be the Kingdom of Heaven!

How blessed I will be if I am gentle because I shall have the earth for my heritage!

How blessed I will be if I mourn without rebelling, because I will be comforted!

How blessed I will be if I hunger and thirst for justice more than I do for bread and wine to satisfy the flesh, because Justice will satisfy me!

How blessed I will be if I am merciful, because I will have divine mercy shown me!

How blessed I will be if I am pure in heart, because God will bend over my pure heart and I will see Him!

How blessed I will be if I am peaceful in spirit, because God will call me His son, because love is in peace and God is Love Who loves whoever is like Him!

How blessed I will be if I am persecuted in the cause of right, because God, my Father, to reward me for my earthly persecutions, will give me the Kingdom of Heaven!

How blessed I will be if I am abused and accused falsely for being Your son, o God! It must not cause me desolation but joy, as it will make me equal to Your best servants, to the Prophets, who were persecuted for the same reason and with whom I firmly believe I shall share the same great eternal reward in Heaven, which is mine!".

Let us look thus at the way of salvation: through the joy of saints.

6"How blessed I will be if I am poor in spirit".

Oh! Satanic thirst for wealth, to what frenzy you lead both rich and poor! The rich who live for their gold: the ill-famed idol of their ruined spirits. The poor who live hating the rich because of their gold, and even if they do not murder them physically, they curse the rich wishing them all sorts of evil. It is not enough not to do evil, one must not even wish to do it. He who curses wishing calamities and death is very like him who kills physically, because he wishes the death of the person he hates. I solemnly tell you that *such a wish is like an action held back, it is like a foetus conceived in a womb and formed, but not yet ejected*. A wicked desire corrupts and ruins man, because it lasts longer than a violent action and is deeper than the action itself.

If a rich man is poor in spirit he does not sin for the sake of his gold, but he turns his gold into sanctification, because he turns it into love. Loved and blessed, he is like spring water that saves travellers in a desert, as he gives generously, without avarice, happy to be able to relieve desperate situations. If he is poor, he is happy in his poverty and eats his bread which is sweetened by the joy of being free from the thirst of gold, he sleeps free from nightmares and gets up well rested for his tranquil work, which is always light when done without greed or envy.

What makes man materially rich is gold, what makes him morally rich are his affections. Gold comprises not only money but also houses, fields, jewels, furniture, herds, everything, in other words, that which makes life wealthy materially. Affections include: blood or marriage ties, friendship, intellectual soundness, public offices. As you can see, if for the first group a poor man can say: "Oh! as far as I am concerned, providing I do not envy those who are rich, I am all right because I am poor, and thus I am settled by force of circumstances", with regard to the second group also a poor man must be careful, because also the poorest man can become sinfully rich in spirit. Who is immoderately attached to a thing, commits a sin.

You may say: "Are we then to hate the wealth that God granted us? Why then does He command us to love our fathers, mothers, wives, children and say: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself?'. You must distinguish. We must love our fathers, mothers, wives and our neighbour, but in the degree indicated by God: "As ourselves". Whereas God is to be loved above everything and with our whole selves. We must not love God as we love the dearest people among our neighbours: because a woman suckled us or because she sleeps on our chest and procreates children for us, but we must love Him with our *whole selves, that is, with all the ability to love* that is in man: the love of a son, of a husband, of a friend and - do not be scandalised - the love of a father. Yes, we must have for the interests of God the same care that a feather has for his children, for whom he lovingly protects his wealth and increases it, and he takes care of and is anxious for their physical growth and intellectual education and for their success in the world.

Love is not an evil and must not become an evil. The graces, which God grants us, are not evil and must not become so. They are love, granted out of love. We must make a loving use of such wealth granted to us by God in personal affections and in worldly goods. And only he who does not make an idol of such wealth but uses it to serve God in holiness, shows that he has no sinful attachment to it. One then practises that holy poverty in spirit that deprives itself of everything in order to be more free to conquer God, the Holy Supreme Wealth. To conquer God: that is to have the Kingdom of Heaven.

7"How blessed I will be if I am gentle".

This may seem to be in contrast with the facts of daily life. Those who are not lowly seem to be prominent and successful in their families, towns and countries. But is theirs a real triumph? No, it is not. It is fear that keeps apparently subdued those who are overwhelmed by the despot, but in actual fact it is nothing but a veil drawn over the rebellion seething against the tyrant. Irascible and overbearing people do not win the love of their relatives, of their own citizens or of their subjects. Neither are intellects or souls convinced to follow the doctrines of masters who impose themselves by stating: "I said so, thus it is". Such masters only create self-taught men seeking the key that can open the closed doors of a wisdom or of a science which they feel to be, and actually is the opposite of what is imposed on them.

Those priests who do not endeavour to conquer souls by means of a patient, humble and loving kindness, do not win any souls to God, but they look like armed warriors who start a fierce attack, such is their intolerant rashness in dealing with souls... Oh! poor souls! if they were holy they would not need you, o priests, to reach the Light. They would already have it within themselves. If they were just, they would not need you, o judges, to be put under the restraint of justice, as they would already have justice within themselves. If they were healthy, they would not need a doctor. Be therefore gentle. Do not put souls to flight. Attract them through love. Because lowliness is love, as poverty in spirit is love.

If you are such you will have the Earth for your heritage and you will take this place to God, whereas before it belonged to Satan, because your lowliness, which besides love is also humility, will have overcome Hatred and Pride, expelling from souls the vile king of hatred and pride, and the world will belong to you, that is, to God, because you will be the just souls that will acknowledge God as the Absolute Master of creation, to Whom praise and blessing are due and everything else which belongs to Him.

8" How blessed I will be if I mourn without rebelling".

Sorrow is on the earth and sorrow wrings tears from men. Sorrow did not exist but man brought it on to the earth and because of his corrupt intellect he continuously strives to increase it in every possible way. Besides diseases and calamities ensuing from thunderbolts, storms, avalanches, earthquakes, man, in order to suffer and above all to make other people suffer - because we would like only other people to suffer, and not ourselves, the effects of means studied to make people suffer - man invents deadly weapons, which are more and more dreadful and moral hardships, which are more and more cunning. How many tears man wrings from his fellow man through the instigation of his secret king: Satan!. And I solemnly tell you that those tears are not an impairment but a perfection of man.

Man is an absent-minded child, a thoughtless superficial child, a backward born child, until tears make him an adult, thoughtful, intelligent person. Only those who weep or have wept, know how to love and can understand. They know how to love their weeping brothers, how to understand them in their grief, how to help them with their goodness, which is fully aware how bitter it is to weep alone. And they know how to love God, because they have realised that everything is grief except God, because they have understood that sorrow can be soothed if tears are shed on God's heart and they have also realised that resigned tears, which do not cause faith to be lost or prayer to become barren and which loathe rebellion, such resigned tears change nature and instead of sorrow they become comfort.

Yes. Those who weep loving the Lord will be comforted.

9" How blessed I will be if I hunger and thirst for justice".

From the moment he is born to the moment he dies, man craves eagerly for food. He opens his mouth at his birth to get hold of his mother's nipple, he opens his lips to swallow some refreshment in the throes of death. He works to feed himself. He makes a huge nipple of the world from which he sucks insatiably for that which is perishable. But what is man? An animal? No, he is a son of God. He is in exile for a few or many years. But his life does not come to an end when he changes his dwelling.

There is a life in life as there is a kernel in a nut. The shell is not the nut, but it is the kernel inside the shell that is the nut. If you sow a shell nothing will come up, but if you sow the shell with the kernel inside it, a big tree will grow. The same applies to man. It is not his flesh that becomes immortal, but his soul. And it is to be nourished to take it to immortality, to which the soul, out of love, will take the body in the blessed resurrection. Wisdom and Justice are the nourishment of the soul. They are taken as food and as drink and they strengthen and the more one takes of them, the more grows the holy eagerness to possess Wisdom and know Justice. But the day will come when the holy insatiable hunger of the soul will be satisfied, it will come. God will give Himself to His child, and will suckle him and the child destined for Paradise will be satisfied with the admirable Mother Who is God Himself, and man will never be hungry again but will rest happily on God's divine bosom. No human science is equal to this divine science. The curiosity of the mind can be gratified, but the necessities of the spirit cannot. Nay, the spirit is disgusted by the difference in taste and makes a wry mouth at the bitter nipple, preferring to suffer the pangs of hunger, rather than be filled with a good that does not come from God.

Be not afraid, o men thirsting or starving for God! Be faithful and you will be satisfied by Him Who loves you.

10" How blessed I will be if I am merciful".

Who amongst men can say: "I do not need mercy"? No one. Now, if in the Old Law it is written: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth", why should we not say in the New Law: "Who has been merciful shall find mercy"? Everybody needs forgiveness.

Well, then: forgiveness is not achieved by formulae or by the form of a rite, which are external symbols granted to man's dull mentality, it is instead obtained through the internal rite of love, which is still mercy. If the sacrifice of a goat or a lamb and the offer of a few coins were prescribed, the reason is that every evil is founded on two roots: greed and pride. Greed is punished through the expense for the purchase of the offering, pride by the open confession of the rite: "I am making this sacrifice because I have sinned". It is also done to anticipate the times and the signs of the times, and in the blood which is shed is symbolised the Blood which will be shed to cancel the sins of men.

Blessed therefore are those who are merciful to those who are hungry, nude, homeless, to those who suffer from the greatest misery, which is to have a bad disposition, as it causes grief both to those who have it and to those who live with them. Be merciful. Forgive, bear with people, help them, teach them, support them.

Do not conceal yourselves in a crystal tower saying: "I am pure and I will not descend amongst sinners". Do not say: "I am rich and happy and I will not hear of other people's miseries". Remember that your richness, your health, your family wealth may vanish quicker than smoke blown away by a strong wind. And remember that crystal acts as a lens and consequently what may be unnoticed if you were mixed among the crowds, cannot be concealed if you place yourselves in a crystal tower where you are alone, isolated and illumined on all sides.

Mercy is necessary to offer a continuous, secret, holy sacrifice of expiation and to obtain mercy.

¹¹*"How blessed I will be if I am pure in heart".*

God is purity. Paradise is the Kingdom of Purity. Nothing impure can enter. Paradise where God is. Therefore, if you are impure, you will not be able to enter the Kingdom of God. Oh! But what a joy the Father grants to His children in advance! Who is pure has in this world an advance of Heaven because God bends over a pure soul and man from the earth can see his God. He is not familiar with the taste of human love, but relishes the flavour of divine love, to the point of being enraptured, and can say: "I am with You and You are in me, I therefore possess You and I recognise You as the most loving spouse of my soul". And believe Me, who has God enjoys substantial changes, of which he himself is unaware, and thus becomes holy, wise, strong; words embellish his lips and his actions acquire a strength that is not of the creature, but comes from God Who lives in it.

What is the life of those who see God? A beatitude. And do you wish to deprive yourselves of such a gift for the sake of fetid impurities?

¹²*"How blessed I will be if I am peaceful in spirit".*

Peace is one of God's characteristics. God is to be found only in peace. Because peace is love, whereas war is hatred. Satan is hatred. God is peace. No man can say that he is the son of God, neither can God call son a man who has an irascible soul always ready to stir up a storm. Not only. Neither can he be called the son of God who, although not a trouble-maker himself, by means of his own great peace does not help to calm the storms stirred up by other people. Who is peaceful propagates peace also without uttering any words. Master of himself and, I dare say, master of God, he divulges Him as a lamp spreads its light, as a thurible exhales its perfume, as a wineskin holds wine, and this sweet oil, which is the spirit of peace issuing from the children of God, gives light in the foggy gloominess of ill-feelings, and purifies the air from the miasmas of malice and calms the raging waves of quarrels.

Let God and men say that you are so.

¹³*"How blessed I will be if I am persecuted in the cause of right".*

Man has become so devilish that he hates good wherever it is, and he hates who is good, as if who is good, even when silent, accuses and reproaches him. In fact the goodness of one person makes the wickedness of a wicked person appear even more wicked... In fact the faith of a true believer makes the hypocrisy of a false believer appear more clearly. In fact, he who by his way of living continuously bears witness to justice can but be hated by the unjust. And then the unjust are pitiless towards the lovers of justice.

The same applies here as in wars. Man makes more progress in the satanic art of persecution than in the holy art of love. But he can persecute only what has a short life. What is eternal in man eludes the snare, nay, it achieves a more energetic vitality than persecution itself. Life escapes through the bleeding wounds or because of the privations that consume those who are persecuted. But the blood makes the purple of the future king and the privations are as many steps to ascend the thrones that the Father has prepared for His martyrs, for whom are reserved the royal seats in the Kingdom of Heaven.

¹⁴*"How blessed I will be if I am accused and abused falsely".*

Strive to have your names written in the celestial books, where names are not written according to human falsehood, which is accustomed to praise those who less deserve praise, where, instead, with justice and love are written the deeds of good people in order to give them the reward promised to the blessed ones by God.

In the past, the Prophets were calumniated and abused. But when the gates of Heaven are opened, they will enter the City of God, like imposing kings, and the angels will now singing out of joy. You, too, who have been abused and accused falsely for being the children of God, will have a heavenly triumph and when the time comes to an end and Paradise is full, then every tear will be dear to you, because through it you will have conquered the eternal glory, which I promise you in the name of the Father.

Go. I will speak to you again tomorrow. Only the sick people should remain that I may relieve them from their pains. Peace be with you and may the meditation on salvation lead you, through love, on to the road the end of which is Heaven."

171. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Two).

25th May 1945. The Sermon of the Mount continues.

¹It is the same place and the same time. The crowd is larger. In a corner, near a path, there is a Roman, who seems anxious to hear but does not want to upset the crowd. I recognise him from his short tunic and the different style of his mantle. Stephen and Hermas are still there.

Jesus walks slowly to His place and resumes speaking.

"What I told you yesterday must not cause you to think that I have come to abolish the Law. No. But since I am the Man, and I understand the weakness of man, I wanted to encourage you to comply with it, turning your spiritual eyes not to the dark abyss, but to the bright Sublimity. Because if the fear of punishment can hold you back three times out of ten, the certainty of a reward will urge you seven times out of ten. Trust is therefore more efficacious than fear. And I want you to be fully and firmly confident, so that you accomplish not seven parts of good out of ten, but ten out of ten and thus gain the most holy prize of Heaven.

I will not change one iota of the Law. And Who gave it amongst the peals of thunder on Sinai? The Most High. Who is the Most High? God One and Triune. Where did He take it from? From His Thought. How did He give it? By His Word. Why did He give it? Out of His Love. You can thus see that the Trinity was present. And the Word, obedient as ever to the Thought and Love, spoke on behalf of the Thought and Love. Could I give Myself the lie? No, I could not.

But since I can do everything, I can complete the Law, make it divinely complete, not what men did throughout centuries, as they did not make it complete, but incomprehensible and impossible to be fulfilled. In fact they superimposed precepts and laws taken from *their own* thoughts, according to *their own* gain, and they thus lapidated and suffocated, sterilised and buried the most holy Law given by God. Can a tree survive if it is continuously struck by avalanches, rubble and floods? No, it will die. The Law dies in many hearts, suffocated by the avalanches of too many superstructures. I have come to remove them all, and after unearthing and reviving the Law, I will make it no longer a law, but a queen.

²Queens promulgate laws. The laws are the work of queens, but they are not above queens. I instead make the Law a queen: I complete it, I crown it, putting on its top the wreath of the evangelic counsels. Before it was order. Now it is more than order. Before it was the necessary thing. Now it is more than the necessary thing: now it is perfection. Who weds it, as I present you with it, becomes immediately a king, because he has reached "perfection", because he has been not only obedient, but also heroic, that is, holy, as holiness is the sum of virtues carried to the greatest height attainable by a creature, heroically loved and practised through a complete detachment from every human desire and consideration.

I could say that he is a saint, whom love and desire prevent from seeing everything but God. As his attention is not distracted by inferior sights, his eyes and heart are fixed on the Most Holy Brightness, which is God and in which, since everything is in God, he can see his distressed brothers stretching out their hands suppliantly. And without taking his eyes away from God, the saint devotes himself to his suppliant brothers. Against the flesh, against wealth, against comforts, he pursues his ideal: to serve. Is a saint poor or disabled? No, he is not. He has succeeded in achieving true wisdom and wealth. He therefore possesses everything. And he never tires because while it is true that he is always active, it is also true that he is continuously nourished. And while he understands the sorrows of the world, he feeds on the delights of Heaven. He is nourished by God and delights in God. *He is a creature who has understood the meaning of life.*

As you can see I neither change nor mutilate the Law, neither do I corrupt it by superimposing human fomenting theories. I complete it. The Law is what it is and shall be such until the last day; not one word will be changed, not one precept will be abolished. It is crowned with perfection. To reach salvation it is sufficient to accept it as it was given. To obtain immediate union with God it is necessary to live it according to My advice. But since heroes are an exception, I will speak to common souls, to the mass of souls, so that no one may say that I have made what is necessary unknown, in order to reach perfection., But of everything I tell you, remember this: he who takes the liberty of infringing one of the least of these commandments, will be considered one of the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. And he who will induce others to infringe them, will be considered one of the least both with regard to himself and *led to the infringement*. He, instead, who through his life and deeds, rather than by words, has convinced others to abide by the Law, will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven and his greatness *will be increased by each of those whom he has led to obey and thus sanctify themselves.*

³I know that what I am about to say will taste bitter to many tongues. But I cannot tell lies, even if the truth I am about to speak will procure Me many enemies.

I solemnly tell you that unless you create anew your justice, detaching it completely from the poor and unfairly defined justice which the Pharisees and Scribes have taught you; unless you are really more just than the Pharisees and Scribes, who think they are just because they increase the number of formulae without any substantial change of their spirits, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Beware of false prophets and erring doctors. They come to you clad as lambs, and they are rapacious wolves; they come clad with holiness and they deride God; they say they love the truth and they feed on falsehood. Study them before following them.

Man has a tongue and speaks with it, he has eyes and sees with them, he has hands and makes signs with them. But he has something else which is a more truthful witness of his real being: his deeds! And what are two hands joined in prayer, if a man is a thief and fornicator? And what are two eyes, which pretending to be inspired, roll in all directions, if after the farce, they greedily stare at a woman or an enemy, out of lust or for murder? And what is a tongue expert in whistling a false song of praise and in seducing by means of honeyed words, if behind your back it calumniates you and is capable of swearing falsely if only it could pass you off as a mean fellow? What is a tongue that says long hypocritical prayers and is then quick in killing the reputation of a neighbour or seducing his good faith? It is disgusting! And disgusting are untruthful hands and eyes. But the deeds of men, the *true* deeds, that is, his behaviour at home, in business, towards his neighbour and servants, are the things that testify: "This man is a servant of the Lord". Because holy deeds are the fruit of true religion.

A good tree does not bear bad fruit and a bad tree does not bear good fruit. Will these thorny bushes ever be able to give you tasty grapes? And those even more stinging thistles, will they ever be able to mature sweet figs for you? No, they will not. In actual fact you will be able to pick only a few sour blackberries from the former and uneatable fruits will come from the latter, which although flowers, are still thorny.

The man who is not just will be able to command respect by his appearance, and only by it. Also the downy thistle looks like a tuft of thin silvery threads adorned with diamonds by the dew. But if inadvertently you touch it, you find out that it is not a tuft, but a bundle of thorns, painful to man, harmful to sheep, so that shepherds uproot them from their pastures and burn them on the fire they light at night so that not even the seed may be spread. A just and provident step. I do not say to you: "Kill the false prophets and hypocritical believers". Nay, I say to you: "Leave the task to God". But I say to you: "Be careful, keep away from them that you may not be poisoned by their juices".

⁴I told you yesterday how God is to be loved. I will insist on how our neighbour is to be loved.

Once it was said: "You shall love your friend and hate your enemy". No, not so. That was all right for the times when man did not have the comfort of God's smile. But now new things have come, when God has loved man so much as to send His Word to redeem him. Now the Word is speaking. And it is already an effusion of Grace. Later the Word will consummate the sacrifice of peace and redemption and there will be not only an effusion of Grace, but Grace will be given to every soul believing in Christ. It is therefore necessary to elevate the love for our neighbour to a perfection that unifies friend and enemy.

Have you been slandered? Love and forgive. Have you been struck? Love and offer the other cheek to him who smacked you, considering that it is better that he gives vent to his wrath on you who can put up with it, rather than on somebody else who would take vengeance for the insult. Have you been robbed? Do not think: "This neighbour of mine is greedy", but charitable say: "This poor brother of mine is needy" and give him also your tunic if he has stolen your mantle. You will make it impossible for him too steal twice, because he will have no need to rob another person of his tunic. You may say: "It may be a vice and not a need". Well, give just the same. God will reward you for it and the wicked man will pay for it. But many times, and this should remind you of what I told you yesterday on lowliness, when he sees how he has been dealt with, his vice will drop from his heart and the sinner will redeem himself making amends for the theft by handing back what he had stolen.

Be generous towards those, who, being more honest, ask you for what they need, instead of robbing you. If the rich were really poor in spirit, as I explained yesterday, there would be no painful social inequalities, the cause of so many human and superhuman calamities. Always consider: "If I were in need, how would I feel if I were denied help?" and act according to the reply of your *ego*. Do to others what you would like done to yourself and do not do to others what you would not like done to yourself.

The old saying: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth", which is not one of the ten commandments, but was added because man, devoid of Grace, is such a beast that he only understands vengeance, the old saying has been cancelled. It has indeed been cancelled by the new word: "Love him who hates you, pray for him who persecutes you, justify him who slanders you, bless him who curses you, help the one who harms you, be pacific with quarrelsome people, be compliant with bothersome persons, willingly help those who have recourse to you without practising usury, do not criticise, do not judge". You do not know the particular reason for men's actions. Be generous and merciful in all kinds of assistance. The more you give the more you will

be given and a full pressed down measure will be poured by God on to the lap of him who has been generous. God will not give you only according to what you have given, but He will give you much more. Endeavour to love and be loved. Quarrels are more costly than friendly settlements and a good grace is like honey, the flavour of which lasts for a long time on one's tongue.

⁵Love, love. Love friends and enemies, to be like your Father, Who allows the rain to fall on the good and the wicked and lets the sun shine on the just and unjust and will grant eternal sunshine and dew, and hellish fire and hail, when the good will be chosen, like selected ears of corn, amongst the sheaves of the harvest. It is not enough to love those who love you and from whom you expect reciprocation. That is no merit: it is a joy and also naturally honest men can do it. Also the publicans and the gentiles do it. But you must love according to God and out of respect for God, Who is the Creator also of those who are your enemies or are not very fond of you. I want the perfection of love in you and I therefore say: "Be perfect as your Father, Who is in Heaven, is perfect".

So great is the precept of love for your neighbour, the perfecting of the precept of love for your neighbour, that I no longer say, as it was said: "Do not kill" because he who kills will be condemned by men. But I say to you: "Do not get angry" because a higher judgement is above you and takes into account immaterial actions. Who insults his brother will be condemned by the Sanhedrin. But who treats him as a madman, and consequently has harmed him, will be condemned by God. It is useless to make offers at the altar, unless you, for the sake of God, first sacrifice your ill-feelings in your hearts and you fulfil the most holy rite of forgiveness. Therefore, when you are about to make an offering to God and you remember that you have wronged your brother and you bear him a grudge because of a fault of his, leave your offer before the altar, make first the sacrifice of your self-esteem, by becoming reconciled to your brother, then come to the altar and only then your sacrifice will be holy. Full agreement is always the best business. The judgement of man is precarious and who stubbornly challenges it, may lose the cause and have to pay the opponent down to the last coin or languish in jail.

In everything turn your eyes to God. Ask yourselves: "Am I entitled to do what God does not do to me?" Because God is not so stubborn and implacable as you are. Woe to you if He were! No one would be saved. Let that consideration induce you to mild, humble, pitiful feeling. And then you will certainly receive a reward from God, both here and in the next world.

⁶Here in front of Me, there is also one who hates Me and dare not say to Me: "Cure me" because he knows that I am aware of his thoughts. But I say: "Let it be done as you wish. And as the scales fall from your eyes, so may ill-feelings and darkness fall from your heart".

You may all go with My peace. I will speak to you again tomorrow."

The crowds disperse slowly, waiting perhaps for the cry of a miracle, which, however, is not heard.

Also the apostles and the first disciples, who remain on the mountain, ask: "Who was it? Has he not been cured?" and they insist with the Master, Who is standing, with folded arms, watching the crowd descending the mountain.

Jesus at first does not reply; He then says: "His eyes are cured, but his soul is not. It cannot be cured because it is full of hatred."

"But who is it? That Roman, perhaps?"

"No. A poor wretch."

"Why did You cure him, then?" asks Peter.

"Should I strike by lightning all the people like him?"

"Lord...I know that You do not want to me to say: "yes", and so I will not say it... but that is what I think... and it is the same..."

"It is the same, Simon of Jonah. You should know then... Oh! How many hearts covered with scales of hatred there are around Me! Come. Let us go up there, to the top, to look from the height at our beautiful sea of Galilee. Only you and I."

172. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Three).

26th May 1945. The Sermon of the Mount continues.

¹The same place and the same time. The people, with the exception of the Roman, are the same. Perhaps the crowd is larger because many people are standing at the beginning of the paths leading to the little valley.

Jesus is speaking:

"One of the errors easily made by man is to have lack of honesty towards himself. And since man is rarely sincere and honest, he has made some provision for himself in order to be compelled to go along the way he wants. This curb, which, after all, as he is a fiery horse, he soon slackens or gives a pull, as he wishes, and thus changes his gait; or he removes it completely and does as he likes, without considering what reproach he may receive from God, from men and from his own conscience. That bit is the oath. But no oath is necessary amongst honest people and God never taught you it. On the contrary He commanded you: "You shall not bear false witness", without any further addition. Because man ought to be frank without the need of anything except the loyalty of his word.

When in Deuteronomy mention is made of vows, also of the vows that are something which originated from a heart considered to be united to God, either through a feeling of need or a sentiment of gratitude, it is written: "Whatever passes your lips, you must keep to, and the vow that you have freely made with your own mouth to the Lord your God must be fulfilled". Mention is always made of the word given, without anything else but the word. Who feels the need of taking an oath is neither sure of himself nor of the opinion his neighbour has of him. And who makes other people take an oath testifies thereby that he distrusts the frankness and honesty of the swearer. As you can see, the habit of taking an oath is one of the consequences of man's moral dishonesty. And it is a shame for man. It is a double shame because man is not even faithful to the shameful thing which an oath is and by deriding God as easily as he derides his neighbour, he swears falsely with the greatest ease and calmness.

Can there be a more contemptible man than a perjurer? A perjurer in fact convinces his neighbour to believe him, often by using a sacred formula, thus calling God to be his accomplice and to stand surety for him, or by invoking his dearest affections: his father, mother, wife, children, his dead relatives, his very life and most essential organs, to support his false statements. He thus deceives his neighbour. He is an impious person, a thief, a traitor, a murderer. Of whom? Of God, of course, because he contaminates the Truth with his disgraceful lies and jeers at Him, daring Him: "Strike me, give me the lie, if You can. You are there, I am here and I laugh at it". Of course, you may laugh, liars and gibbers! But the moment will come when you will not laugh and that will happen when He, to Whom all power is entrusted, will appear to you, dreadful in His majesty, and simply by His aspect will make you stand to attention and will strike you with the lightening of His eyes, before His voice hurls you to your eternal destiny branding you with His curse. He is a thief because he takes possession of a reputation which he does not deserve. His neighbour, impressed by his oath, grants it to him, and the serpent adorns himself with it, pretending to be what he is not. He is a traitor because by his oath he promises something which he does not want to keep. He is a murderer: he kills either the honour of his fellow man depriving him of his reputation through false witness or he kills his own soul because a perjurer is a vile sinner in the eyes of God, Who sees the truth, also when no one else sees it.

God cannot be deceived, neither by means of false words, nor by means of hypocritical deeds. He sees. He does not lose sight of each man for a moment. And there is no fortified stronghold or deep cellar which His eyes cannot penetrate. Also within you, God penetrates the stronghold which every man has round his heart. And He judges you not according to what you swear, but to what you do.

²I will therefore substitute another order for the one given to you, when the oath enjoyed great favour to put a restraint on lies and on the easiness of failure to keep a promise. I do not say as the ancients said: "Do not swear falsely, but keep your oath", but I say to you: "Never swear". Neither by Heaven which is the throne of God, nor by the earth which is the stool of His feet, nor for Jerusalem and her Temple which are the City of the Great King and the House of the Lord our God.

Do not swear either by the graves of the deceased or by their souls. Graves are full of the dross of the inferior part of man, which is common also to animals, and with regard to their souls, leave them in their dwellings. Do not cause them to suffer or to be struck with horror, if they are the souls of just people already in the foreknowledge of God. And although they are in such foreknowledge, which is partial knowledge, because they will not possess God in the fullness of His brightness until the moment of Redemption, they can but suffer seeing you sinners. And if they are not just, do not increase their torture by reminding them of their sin through yours. Leave the holy deceased in their peace and the unholy ones in their pains. Do not deprive the former of anything, do not add anything to the latter. Why appeal to the dead? They cannot speak. The saints because charity prevents them from speaking: they would have to give you the lie too many times. The damned because hell does not open its gates and the damned only open their mouths to curse, and their voices are suffocated by the hatred of Satan and of the demons, because the damned are like demons.

Do not swear by the head of your father or of your mother, or by the head of your wife or of your innocent children. You have no right to do so. Are they perhaps money or merchandise? Are they a signature on a document? They are more and they are less than such things. They are blood and flesh of your own blood, man, but they are also free creatures and you cannot use them as slaves to guarantee your false statements. And they are less than your own signature, because you are intelligent, free and grown up, you are not interdicted, neither are you a child who does not know what he is doing and must be represented by

his parents. You are a man gifted with reason and consequently responsible for your actions and you must act by yourself, employing, as a guarantee for *your own* deeds and words, *your own* honesty and your own frankness, the reputation that *you* enjoy with your neighbour, not the honesty, the frankness of your relatives and the reputation they enjoy. Are fathers responsible for their children? Yes, they are, but only as long as they are under age. After, everybody is responsible for himself. Not always just children are born of just parents, nor is it so that a holy woman is married to a holy man. Why then use the justice of a relative as a guarantee? Likewise, holy children may be born of a sinner, and as long as they are innocent, they are holy. Why then appeal to a pure soul for an impure act of yours, such as an oath which you wish to swear falsely?

Do not swear by your own head, your eyes, your tongue, your hands. You have no right to. Everything you have belongs to God. You are only the temporary guardians, the bankers of the moral or material treasures which God granted you. Why then make use of what does not belong to you? Can you add one hair to your head or change its colour? And if you cannot do that, why do you use your sight, your word, the freedom of your limbs to corroborate your oath? Do not challenge God. He could take you at your word and dry your eyes as He can dry up your orchards, or take your children away from you, or crush your houses to remind you that He is the Lord and you His subjects, and that who idolizes himself and thinks he is above God, challenging Him with his falsehood, is cursed.

³Let your speech be simply: yes, it is; no, it is not. Nothing else. Any addition is suggested by the Evil one, who later will laugh at you, because you cannot remember anything and you will contradict yourself and you will be jeered at and recognised as a liar.

Be sincere, My children, both in your words and in your prayers. Do not behave like the hypocrites, who, when praying, love to stand in synagogues or in the corners of squares where they may be seen by people and praised as just and pious men, whereas, within their families, they are guilty towards God and towards their neighbour. Do you not consider that that is like a form of perjury? Why do you want to maintain as true what is not true in order to win a reputation which you do not deserve? An hypocritical prayer aims at saying: "I am truly a saint. I swear it in the presence of those who see me and cannot deny they saw me praying". Like a veil laid on existing wickedness, a prayer said for such purposes becomes blasphemy.

Let God proclaim you saints and live in such a way that your whole life may shout on your behalf: "Here is a servant of God". But you must be silent for your own sake. Do not allow your tongue to be urged by pride and thus become an object of scandal in the angels' eyes. It would be better for you to become mute at once if you do not have the power to control pride and tongue, and you proclaim yourselves just and pleasing to God. Leave that poor glory to proud and false people. Leave that fleeting reward to haughty and deceitful people! A poor reward! But that is what they want and they will not have any other, because you cannot have more than one. Either the true reward, the Heavenly one, which is eternal and just, or the sham one, the earthly one, which lasts as long as the life of man, and even less, and which is paid for, after this life, with a truly mortifying punishment, because it is an unjust reward.

⁴Listen how you must pray with your lips and with your work and with your whole selves, urged by your hearts which do love God and feel He is your Father, but they always remember who the Creator is and what the creature is, and in the presence of God they are always full of reverential love, whether you are praying or are busy, whether you are walking or resting, earning or helping.

I said urged by your hearts. It is the first and essential feature. Because everything comes from your hearts and your minds: your words, your eyes, your deeds are like your hearts. A just man draws good from his just heart and the more he draws the more he finds, because the good done creates more good, like blood that is renewed circulating in the veins and flows back to the heart enriched with new elements taken from the oxygen, which it had absorbed or from the food juices, which it had assimilated. Whereas a wicked man can draw but fraud and poison from his gloomy heart full of fraud and poison, which grow more and more because they are corroborated by accumulating sins, while the blessings of God accumulate in a good man. You may be sure that it is the exuberance of the heart that overflows from lips and reveals itself in deeds.

Make your hearts humble, pure, loving, trustful and sincere and love God with the chaste love of a virgin for her bridegroom. I solemnly tell you that each soul is a virgin married to the Eternal Lover, to God Our Lord; this world is the time of engagement during which the guardian angel of every man is the spiritual paranymp, and all the hours and contingencies of life are as many maids preparing the nuptial trousseau. The hour of death is the hour for the accomplished wedding when the introduction, embrace and union take place and the soul can raise the veil of the bridal dress and throw itself into the arms of God and the Spouse will not cause scandal by loving so.

But for the time being, o souls still victimised in the bonds of the engagement to God, when you wish to speak to the Spouse, withdraw to the peace of your abode, above all to the peace of your inner abodes and, angels of flesh helped by your guardian angels, speak to the King of angels. Speak to your Father in the secrecy of your hearts and of your inner rooms. Leave outside

everything that belongs to the world: eagerness to be noted and to edify, and the scruples of long prayers full of words, of monotonous, tepid words lacking love.

For God's sake, get rid of standards in your prayers. There are really some people who waste many hours reciting a monologue only with their lips and which is a real soliloquy because not even the guardian angels listen to it; it is such a vain noise that they become absorbed in fervent prayer for the silly men guarded by them, in an effort to find a remedy. There are in fact some men who would not spend those hours in a different way, not even if God appeared to them saying: "The salvation of the world depends on your leaving such soulless manner of speech and going, shall we say, just to draw water from a well and pour it on to the ground for My sake and the sake of your fellow men". There are indeed many who believe that their monologue is more important than the kindness in receiving a visitor or the charity in helping a person in need. They are souls which have fallen into the idolatry of prayer.

Prayer is an act of love. And one can love praying or baking bread, meditating or assisting a sick person, making a pilgrimage to the Temple or looking after the family, sacrificing a lamb or sacrificing one's desires, even the honest desire to concentrate on the Lord. It is sufficient for you to have your whole selves and all your actions impregnated with love. Be not afraid! The Father sees, understands, listens, grants. How many graces are granted for one single, true perfect sigh of love! How much wealth for an intimate sacrifice made with love. Do not be like the Gentiles. God does not need to be told what He has to do for your needs. The pagans may tell their idols, which cannot understand. But you cannot tell God, the True Spiritual God, Who is not only God and King, but also your Father and knows what you need, even before you ask Him.

⁵Ask and it will be given to you, look and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. Because whoever asks, will receive, whoever looks, will find and it will be opened to whomsoever knocks. When your child stretches his little hand towards you saying: "Father, I am hungry" do you perhaps give him a stone? Will you give him a snake if he asks for a fish? No, you will give him bread and fish, and caresses and blessings over and above, because it is pleasant for a father to nourish his son and see his happy smiles. If therefore you, whose hearts are imperfect, are capable of giving gifts to your children, out of a natural love that is common also to animals for their offspring, how much more will your Father, Who is in Heaven, grant to those who ask Him for the good and necessary things for their welfare. Do not be afraid to ask and do not be afraid not to receive!

However, I wish to warn you against an easy error: do not behave like those who are weak in their faith and in their love. Also amongst believers there are pagans whose poor religion is a mixture of superstition and faith, a building tampered with, into which all kinds of parasitic herbs have penetrated, so much so that it falls to pieces, and they, weak and pagans as they are, feel their faith is dying if they are not heard.

You ask. And you think it is fair to ask. And for that particular moment a certain grace may be right. But life does not end at *that* moment. And what is good today may *not* be good tomorrow. You do not know that, because you know only the present, and that is a grace of God, too. But God knows also the future. And God to save you a greater pain does not hear your prayers.

During My year of public life more than once I heard hearts moaning: "How much I suffered then, when God did not hear me. But now I say: 'It was better thus, because that grace would have prevented me from reaching this hour of God'". I heard others say to Me: "Why, Lord, do You not hear me? You grant it to everybody but not to me?" And yet, although I was sorry to see them suffer, I had to say: "I cannot", because to hear them would have meant hindering their flight to a perfect life.

Also the Father some times says: "I cannot". Not because He cannot satisfy the request immediately, but because He does not want to satisfy it in view of future consequences. Listen. A child is suffering from intestinal trouble. His mother calls a doctor and the doctor says: "He must fast to be cured". The mother, always pitiful, joins her moaning to her son's. She thinks that the doctor's order is severe and hard. She feels that such fasting and crying may be detrimental to her son. But the doctor is inflexible. At last he says: "Woman, I know, you don't. Do you want to lose your son or do you want me to save him?" The mother shouts: "I want him to live". "In that case" says the doctor "I cannot let him have any food. It would kill him". Also the Father some times says so. You, pitiful mothers of your own *ego*, do not want to hear it weep because some grace has been denied. But God says: "I cannot. It would do you harm". The day will come, or eternity will come, when you will say: "Thank You, my God, for not listening to my foolishness!"

⁶What I said with regard to prayers, I say with regard to fasting. When you fast, do not look sad, as hypocrites do, who on purpose disfigure their faces that the world may know and believe that they are fasting, even if it is not true. They also have received their reward with the praise of the world, and will not receive another one. Instead, when you fast, look happy, wash your faces thoroughly so that they may look fresh and smooth, put oil on your heads and scents on your hair and smile like one who has been well fed. Oh! Truly there is no food that nourishes as much as love does! And who fasts with a loving spirit,

feeds on love! I solemnly tell you that even if the world calls you "vain" and "publicans", the Father will see your heroic secret and will give you a double reward. One for your fasting and the other for the sacrifice of not being praised for it.

And now go and feed your bodies, since your souls have been nourished. Those two poor people may stay here with us. They will be blessed guests who will give flavour to our bread. Peace be with you."

⁷And the two poor people stay. One is a very lean woman, the other a very old man. They are not together. Chance had joined them, as they were standing dejected in a corner, stretching out in vain their hands towards those who passed in front of them.

Jesus goes straight towards them since they dare not come forward and takes them by the hand leading them to the middle of the group of the apostles, under a kind of tent that Peter has put up in a corner and under which they perhaps take shelter at night and they gather during the hot hours of the day. It is a shed formed by branches and... mantles. But it serves its purpose, although it is so low that Jesus and the Iscariot, the tallest of the lot, have to bend to enter.

"Here a father and a sister. Bring what we have. While taking our food we will hear their story." And Jesus personally serves the two shy old souls and listens to their sorrowful stories. The old man is alone, after his daughter went far away with her husband and forgot her father. The woman is also alone, after a fever killed her husband and, in addition, she is ill.

"The world despises us because we are poor" says the old man. "I wander about begging for alms to scrape together some money to celebrate Passover. I am eighty years old. I have always kept Passover and this may be the last time. But I do not want to go to Abraham's bosom with any regret. As I forgive my daughter, so I hope to be forgiven. And I want to keep my Passover."

"It is a long way, father."

"The way to Heaven is even longer, if one is not present at the rite."

"Are you going by yourself? And if you feel ill on the way?"

"The angel of God will close my eyes."

Jesus caresses his white trembling head and asks the woman: "And what about you?"

"I am looking for work. If I were better fed I would get rid of my fever. And if I were cured I could work at the corn."

"Do you think that food alone could cure you?"

"No, You could, too. But I am a poor thing, too poor to ask You for mercy."

"And if I cured you, what would you like afterwards?"

"Nothing else. I would already have had more than I could hope for."

Jesus smiles and hands her a piece of bread dipped into some water and vinegar, which I think is their drink. The woman eats it without speaking and Jesus continues smiling.

⁸The meal is over. It was so frugal! The apostles and disciples look for a shady place along the slopes and among the thickets. Jesus remains under the tent. The old man is lying on the grass and tired as he was, has fallen asleep.

After a short time the woman, who had gone away looking for some shade where to rest, comes towards Jesus Who smiles at her to cheer her up. She comes forward looking shy, but happy, almost as far as the tent. She is then overcome by joy, she walks with a vigorous stride and falling flat on her face with a choked cry exclaims: "You have cured me! May You be blessed! At this time I used to shiver with fever, but I am not now... Oh!" and she kisses Jesus' feet.

"Are you sure that you have been cured? I did not tell you. It might be by chance..."

"Oh! no! Now I understand Your smile when You handed me the bread. Your virtue entered me with that morsel. I have nothing to give You in exchange, except my heart. Order Your maid, Lord, and she will obey You until she dies."

"Yes. See that old man? He is all alone and he is just. You had a husband and death took him away. He had a daughter and selfishness took her away. And that is worse. And yet he does not curse. But it is not fair that he should go about alone in his last hours. Be a daughter to him."

"Yes, my Lord."

"Mind you, it means working for two."

"I am strong now, and I will do it."

"Go up there, then, to that cliff and tell the man who is resting there, the one wearing a grey tunic, to come to Me."

The woman goes away quickly and comes back with Simon Zealot.

"Come, Simon, I want to speak to you. Woman, wait here."

Jesus walks away for a few yards.

"Do you think that Lazarus would find it difficult to take on another worker?"

"Lazarus? I do not think that he even knows how many servants he has! One more, one less!... But who is it?"

"That woman. I cured her and..."

"That is enough, Master. If You cured her it means that You love her. What You love is sacred to Lazarus. I commit myself for him."

"That is true. What I love is sacred to Lazarus. You are right. And that is why Lazarus will become a saint, because by loving what I love he will love perfection. I want to join that old man to that woman and let that patriarch keep his last Passover in great joy. I am very fond of old holy people and I am happy if I can give them a serene sunset."

"You love also children..."

"Yes, and sick people..."

"And those who weep..."

"And those who are alone..."

"Oh! My Master! Don't You realise that you are fond of everybody? Also of Your enemies?"

"I do not realise it, Simon. To love is My nature. There... the patriarch is waking up. Let us go and tell him that he will be keeping Passover with a daughter beside him, and without any more need for bread."

They do back to the tent where the old woman is waiting for them and the three of them go towards the old man who has sat up and is tying his sandals.

"What are you going to do, father?"

"I am going down to the valley. I hope to find some shelter for the night and tomorrow I will beg on the road and then down, down, in a month's time, if I am not dead, I will be in the Temple."

"No."

"Must I not?... Why!"

"Because God does not want it. You will not go alone. This woman will come with you. She will take you where I tell her and you will be made welcome for My sake. You will keep your Passover, but without any trouble. You have already carried your cross, father. Put it down now. All you have to do is to concentrate in prayer thanking the good Lord."

"But why... why... I... I do not deserve so much... You... a daughter... It is more than if You gave me twenty years... And where, where are You sending me?..." The old man is weeping into his long beard.

"I am sending you to Lazarus of Theophilus. I do not know whether you know him."

"Oh!... I come from the border of Syria and I remember Theophilus. But... Oh! Blessed Son of God, allow me to bless You!"

And Jesus, sitting on the grass, in front of the old man, does bend His head to let him impose solemnly his hands on it, thundering out in a very deep voice the old blessing: "May the Lord bless You and keep You. May the Lord let His face shine on You and be gracious to You. May the Lord uncover His face to You and be gracious to You. May the Lord uncover His face to You and bring You to peace."

Jesus, Simon and the woman reply together: "Amen."

173. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Four).

27th May 1945. The Sermon of the Mount continues.

¹The crowd is growing larger and larger as the days go by. There are men, women, old people, children, rich and poor alike. The couple, Stephen and Hermas, is always present, although not yet associated with the old disciples led by Isaac. And there

is also the new couple formed yesterday: the old man and the woman. They are in the very front, near their Comforter and they look much more cheerful than yesterday. The old man, to make up for the many months or years during which he was neglected by his daughter, has laid his wrinkled hand on the knees of the woman and she is caressing it out of the inborn instinct of a morally sound woman to be maternal.

Jesus passes near them to climb up too His rustic pulpit; and while passing He caresses the head of the old man who looks at Him as if he already saw Him as God.

Peter says something to Jesus Who makes a gesture as if He wanted to say: "It does not matter." But I do not understand what the apostle says. Peter remains near Jesus, and Judas Thaddeus and Matthew join him. The other apostles are scattered among the crowd.

²"Peace be with you all!

Yesterday I spoke of prayer, of swearing, of fasting. Today I want to instruct you in other perfections. They are also prayer, trust, sincerity, love, religion.

The first thing I will speak too you of is the right use of riches, changed into as many treasures in Heaven by the good will of the faithful servant. The treasures of the earth do not last. But the treasures of Heaven are eternal. Are you fond of what is yours? Are you sorry to die because you will no longer be able to look after your property and you will have to leave it? In that case transfer them to Heaven. You may say: "What is of the earth will not enter Heaven and You have taught us that money is the filthiest thing on earth. How can we transpose them to Heaven?" No. You cannot take money, material as it is, into the Kingdom where everything is spiritual. But you can take the fruit of money.

When you give a banker your money, why do you do it? That he may make it bear interest. You do not deprive yourselves of it, not even temporarily, that he may give you back ten plus one or even more. Then you are happy and you praise the banker. Otherwise you say: "He is honest, but he is a fool". And, if instead of ten plus one, he should give you nine saying: "I lost the rest", you would denounce him and send him to prison. What is the fruit of money? Does the banker sow your money and water it to make it grow? No. The fruit is given by a skilful handling of business, so that by means of mortgage deeds and loans at interest, the money is increased by the premium rightly requested for the loan of the gold. Is it not so?

Now listen. God gives you earthly riches. To some people he grants a great deal, to some only as much as they need to live, and He says to you: "Now it is up to you. I have given them to you. Gain by these means an end as My love wishes for your own good. I have entrusted you with them, but not that you may turn them into evil. Make your wealth bear interest, for this real Fatherland, both because of the reputation I hold you in, and out of gratitude for My gifts".

³And here is the method to gain this end.

Do not accumulate your treasures on the earth, living for them, being cruel for them, cursed by your neighbour and by God on account of them. It is not worth it. They are never safe in this world. Thieves can always rob you. Fire can always destroy your houses. Diseases of plants and animals can exterminate herds and orchards. How many things undermine your property! Whether it is real estate and unassailable, such as houses and gold; whether its nature is liable to be damaged, such as all living things, vegetables and animals, or precious cloths, they can be ruined. Thunderbolts, fire and floods can destroy houses; thieves, blight, dry weather, rodents and insects can damage fields; catching diseases, fever, crippling, murrain can destroy cattle; moths and mice can ruin valuable pieces of cloth and precious pieces of furniture; oxidization can corrode vases, chandeliers and artistic gates; everything is subject to destruction.

But if you turn earthly welfare into supernatural good, then it becomes free from all damage by time, men and calamities. Store up your treasure in Heaven, where thieves cannot break in, and where no calamities occur. Work with merciful love for *all* the miseries of the earth. You may caress your money and kiss it if you wish so, you may rejoice at the plentiful crops, at the vineyards laden with grapes, at the countless number of olives which bend the branches of the olive-trees, and at your profile sheep with turgid udders. You may rejoice at all that, but not in a sterile or human way. Rejoice with love and admiration, with supernatural delight and foresight.

"Thank You, my God, for this money, for these crops, plants, sheep and for this business! Thank you, sheep, plants, meadows, business, which serve me so well. May you all be blessed, *because* through Your goodness, o Eternal Father, and through yours, o things of mine, I can do so much good to those who are hungry, or are naked, homeless, sick, alone... Last year I did it for ten. This year - as I have more money, although I gave away much as alms, and the crops are more plentiful and the flocks larger - I will give twice, three times as much as last year. So that everybody, also those who have no wealth of their own, may partake of my joy and bless with me the Eternal Lord". That is the prayer of a just man. A prayer which joined

to your deeds, transfers your wealth to Heaven, and not only keeps it eternally for you, but you will find it increased by the holy fruit of love.

Store your treasure in Heaven so that your heart may also be there, above and beyond the risk that not only your gold, your houses, fields and herds may suffer damage, but that your very heart may be attacked and robbed, corroded, burnt and killed by the spirit of the world. If you do that, you will have your treasure in your heart because you will have God within you until the blessed day when you will be in Him.

⁴But in order to diminish the fruit of charity, take care to be charitable in a supernatural spirit. What I said in regard to prayer and to fasting applies also to charity and to any other good action you may do.

Keep the good you may do free from the violating sensation of the world, keep it immune from human praise. Do not profane the scented rose of your charity and of your good deeds, as it is a true censer of perfumes agreeable to the Lord. Good is profaned by a proud spirit, by the desire to be noted when doing good and by the quest for praise. The rose of charity is then dribbled and eaten away by the big slimy snails of satisfied pride and the censer is filled with the fetid straw of the litter on which the proud man basks like a well fed animal.

Oh! Those deeds of charity accomplished to be pointed out by people! It would be better, much better, if they had not been performed at all. Who does not do them, commits a sin of harshness. Who does them letting people know both the amount given and the name of the person to whom it was given, and begging for praise, commits a sin of pride by making the offer known, as he says: "See how much I can afford?", sins against charity because he humbles the beneficiary by making his name known, and commits a sin of spiritual avarice as he wants to store up human praises... It is straw, nothing but straw. Let God and His angels praise you.

When you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you, to draw the attention of passers-by and win their praise, as the hypocrites do, who want to be praised by men and thus give alms only where they can be seen by many people. They, too, have received their reward and will not have another one from God. Do not commit the same sin and do not be so presumptuous. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing, so secret and modest is your almsgiving and then *forget about it*. Do not linger admiring your deed, swelling with it like the toad that contemplates itself with its veiled eyes in the pond and sees also the clouds, trees and a chart near the bank reflected in the still water and when it sees that it is so small as compared to them, which are so large, it swells up with air until it bursts. Also your charity is nothing as compared to the Infinite, which is the Charity of God, and if you wanted to become like Him and make your small charity so big as to be equal to His, you would fill yourselves with the wind of pride and would end up by perishing.

Forget about it. Forget about the action itself. A light, a sweet voice will always be present with you and will make your day bright, sweet and happy. Because that light will be the smile of God, the honey will be the spiritual peace, which still comes from God, and the voice will be the voice of God, the Father Who will say to you: "Thank you". He sees the hidden evil and the concealed good and will give you a reward for them. I can..."

⁵Master, You give the lie to Your own words!" The sudden resentful remarks comes from the centre of the crowd.

They all turn round in the direction of the voice. There is some confusion. Peter says: "I told You! Eh! When there is one of those over there... everything goes wrong!" Many people in the crowd hiss and grumble against the reviler.

Jesus is the only one who remains calm. He has folded His arms and is standing, tall as He is, on His rock, with the sun in front of Him, in His dark blue tunic.

The reviler, heedless of the reaction of the crowd, goes on: "You are a bad Master because You teach what You do not do and..."

"Be quiet! Go away! Shame!" shout the crowd. And again: "Go back to your Scribes! The Master is quite enough for us! Let the hypocrites go with the hypocrites! You false masters! Usurers!..." and they continue but Jesus thunders out: "Silence! Let him speak" and the crowds no longer shout but they whisper their insults glaring at him at the same time.

"Yes. You teach what You do not do. You told us that we should give alms without being seen, and yesterday in the presence of a whole crowd You said to two poor people: "Stay and I will appease your hunger"."

"I said: "Let the two poor people stay here. They will be the blessed guests who will give flavour to *our* bread". Nothing else. I did not say I wanted to satisfy their hunger. Which poor man has not at least some bread? It was My joy to extend to them our good friendship."

"Of course! You are cunning and You can play the lamb!..."

The old man stands up, turns round and raising his walking stick he shouts: "Infernal tongue who are accusing the Holy One, do you think that you know everything and that you can accuse Him of what you know? As you do not know who God is and who He is Whom you are insulting, so you do not know His deeds. Only the angels and my overjoyed heart know. Listen, men, listen everybody and see whether Jesus is the liar and the proud man that this traitor to the Temple is saying. He..."

"Be quiet, Ishmael! Be quiet for My sake! If I made you happy, please make Me happy by being silent" Jesus begs him.

"I obey You, Holy Son. But let me say only this: the blessing of an old faithful Israelite is on Him Who assisted me in the name of God and God put that blessing on my lips for me and for Sarah, my new daughter. But there will be *no* blessing on your head. I will not curse you. I will not foul, with a curse, my mouth which must say to God: "Receive me". I did not do it to her who disowned me, and I have already received a divine reward for it. But there is One who will take the place of the Innocent you are accusing and of Ishmael, the friend of God, Who assists Him."

A chorus of shouts closes the speech of the old man who sits down again, while a man sneaks away, followed by insults. The crowds then shout to Jesus: "Go on, go on, Holy Master! We will listen only to You. Listen to us, not to those cursed birds of evil omen! They are jealous, because we love You more than we love them! But You are holy, they are wicked. Go on, speak to us. You can see that we have no other wish but to hear You. Our homes, our business? They are nothing, we left them to hear You."

⁶Yes, I will speak to you. But do not be upset by what happened. Pray for those poor people. Forgive them as I do. Because if you forgive men their faults, also your Father Who is in Heaven will forgive you your sins. But if you bear men a grudge and do not forgive them, neither will your Father forgive you your shortcomings. And everybody needs to be forgiven.

I was saying to you that God will give you a reward, even if you do not ask to be rewarded for the good you have done. But do not do good to be rewarded, to have a security for tomorrow. Do not do good restricted within narrow limits by fear: "And after, will I have enough for myself? And should I have nothing, who will help me? Will I find anyone who will do what I did? And when I will no longer be able to give, will I still be loved?"

Look: I have mighty friends among rich people and I have friends amongst the poor people of the earth. And I solemnly tell you that the mighty ones are not the most loved. I go to them not for My own sake or profit. But because they can give Me much for those who have nothing. I am poor. I have nothing. I would like to have all the treasures in the world and change them into bread for those who are hungry, into homes for the homeless, into clothes for the naked and into medicines for the sick. You may say: "You can cure people". Yes, I can do that and other things. But I do not always find faith in men, and I cannot do what I would do and would like to do, if the hearts of men had faith in Me. I would like to help also those who have no faith. And as they do not ask the Son of man for miracles, I would like, as a man to man, to help them. But I have nothing. That is why I stretch out My hand to those who are rich and I ask them: "Give me some alms, in the name of God". That is why I have high-placed friendships. Tomorrow, when I am no longer on the earth, there will still be poor people, but I shall not be there to work miracles for those who have faith, nor to give alms to lead to faith. But then My rich friends, who are in touch with Me, will have learned how to help and My apostles, after their experience with Me, will have learned how to give alms out of love for their brothers. And the poor will always receive assistance.

Yesterday, I received from one who has nothing, more than all those who are rich have given Me. He is a friend, and as poor as I am. But he gave Me something which no money can buy, and which made Me happy, bringing back to Me so many serene hours of My childhood and youth, when every evening the hands of a Just One were laid on My head and I went to rest with the blessing as the guardian of My sleep. Yesterday this poor friend of Mine made Me king with his blessing. You thus see that none of My rich friends has given Me what he gave Me. Therefore, be not afraid. Even if you no longer have the power of money, providing you have love and holiness, you can still assist who is poor, tired and distressed.

⁷And I therefore say to you: do not worry too much because you are afraid of having too little. You will always have what is necessary. Do not worry too much about your future. Nobody knows how much future there is ahead of him. Do not worry about what you will eat to support yourselves in life or what clothes you will put on to keep your bodies warm. The life of your souls is by far more precious than its clothes. And your Father knows. You ought to know, too. Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns, and yet they do not starve to death because the heavenly Father feeds them. And you men, the favourite creatures of the Father, are worth much more than they are.

Which of you, with all his talent, can add one single cubit to his height? If you cannot raise your height even by a span, how can you possibly change your future conditions, increasing your wealth, to ensure that you will live to a long and happy old age? Can you say to death: "You shall come for me when I want"? You cannot. Why, then, worry about your future? And why go to so much trouble lest you should be left without clothes? Think of the lilies growing in the fields: they do not work or

spin, they do not buy any cloth from vendors, yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of them. Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field, which is there today and will be thrown into the furnace tomorrow or used to feed the cattle and will thus end up in ash or dung, how much more He will see to you, His children.?

Do not be of little faith. Do not worry about an uncertain future saying: "What shall I eat when I am old? What shall I drink? How will I clothe myself?" Leave such worries to the Gentiles, who do not have the lofty certainty of the divine paternity. You have it and you know that the Father is aware of your needs and loves you. Therefore trust Him. Seek first what is really necessary: faith, goodness, charity, humility, mercy, purity, justice, meekness, the three and four main virtues, and all the others as well, in order to be the friends of God, and have a right to His Kingdom. And I can assure you that all the rest will be given to you as well, without having to ask for it. There is no rich man richer than a saint or any man safer than he is. God is with the saint and the saint is with God. He does not ask anything for his body, and God supplies what is necessary. But he works for his soul, and God gives Himself to him in this world, and Paradise in the next one.

So do not go to any trouble for what is not worth your trouble. Let your imperfections grieve you, not your scanty earthly means. Do not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will take care of itself, and you will take care of it when you live it. Why worry today? Is life not already quite full of yesterday's sad memories and of today's troubles, that we should feel the need to add the nightmares of tomorrow's uncertainties? Leave to each day its own trouble! There will always be in life more pains than we would wish, without adding the present pains to future ones! Always say the great word of God: "Today". You are His children, created to His likeness. So say with Him: "Today".

And today I give you My blessing. May it accompany you until the beginning of a new today: of tomorrow, that is when I will give you once again My peace in the name of God."

174. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Five). Encounter with the Magdalene.

29th May 1945.

¹It is a glorious morning and the air is clearer than usual. Distances seem to be shortened and remote things seem to be seen through a magnifying lens so clear and neat are the least details. The crowds are getting ready to listen to the Master. Day by day the country is becoming more beautiful in its luxurious dress at the height of the springtime season, which in Palestine I think is at the end of March and beginning of April, because later it has the look typical of summertime, with ripe crops and thick fully developed foliage.

The whole country is now in bloom. From the height of the mountain, which is adorned with its own flowers even in spots which would appear least suitable for blossom growth, one can see the flexuous corn undulating down in the plain, blown by the breeze making it look like sea-green waves, with a pale golden hue at the top of the ears now seeding in their bristly awns. The fruit trees, completely covered with petals stand straight above the crops undulating in the light breeze, and look like as many huge powder-puffs or balls of white, pale pink, dark pink, bright red gauze. The olive-trees by contrast, in their dress of penitent ascetics seem to be praying and their prayers are already changing into a tentative snowfall of tiny white flowers.

The top of Mount Hereon is like pink alabaster and is kissed by the sun. Two diamond threads - they look like threads from here - run down from the alabaster top twinkling in an unbelievable fashion in the sun, and disappear into the green woods; they appear once again down in the valley where they form water-courses which flow towards Lake Merom, which cannot be seen from here. They then flow out with the beautiful waters of the Jordan and later drop into the light sapphire sea of Galilee, which twinkles like chips of precious stones set in and lit up by the sun. The sails moving on the lake, calm and splendid in its frame of gardens and wonderful countryside, seem driven by small light clouds sailing in the sea of the sky.

Nature seems to be smiling in this early hour of a spring day.

And the crowds throng incessantly. They come up from all directions: old, healthy, sick, children and young couples who wish to start their married life with the blessing of God's word. There are beggars and wealthy people who call the apostles and give them offerings for those who are poor and they are so anxious to find a concealed place in which to do it that they seem to be going to confession. Thomas has taken one of the travelling bags and calmly pours all the money into it as if it were chicken-feed, and then takes it to the rock where Jesus is speaking, and he laughs happily saying: "Rejoice, Master! You have enough for everybody today!"

Jesus smiles and says: "And we shall start at once, so that those who are sad may be happy immediately. You and your companions will select the poor and sick people and bring them here."

That takes a comparatively short time, although they have to listen to the cases of many people and it would have taken much longer without the practical help of Thomas, who, standing on a stone to be seen by everybody, shouts in his powerful voice: "All those suffering from physical trouble go to my right hand side, over there, in the shade." The Iscariot follows his

example as he, too, is gifted with an exceptionally powerful and beautiful voice, and he shouts: "And all those who think they are entitled to alms should come here near me. And make sure you are not telling lies because the eyes of the Master can read your hearts."

The crowds start moving about to form three groups: those who are sick, those who are poor, and those who are anxious only to hear Jesus teaching.

²But two people, and then three of the last group seem to be in need of something which is neither health nor money, but is more necessary than both: a woman and two men. They look at the apostles but dare not speak. The severe looking Simon Zealot passes by; also Peter passes by; he is busy speaking to a dozen little children to whom he promises some olives if they keep quiet until the end of the sermon, and a thrashing if they disturb while the Master is speaking; the elderly grave Bartholomew passes by; Matthew and Philip pass carrying a cripple who would have to struggle too much to open his way through the crowd; also the very old poor woman - I wonder how old she is - who weeps telling James all her troubles; James of Zebedee passes by holding in his arms a poor girl, who is certainly ill, and whom he has taken from her mother to ensure that she does not get hurt by the crowds, while the panting mother follows him; the last to pass by are Andrew and John, in his serene simplicity of a holy child, is willing to go with his companions, Andrew, on account of his reservedness prefers going with his old fishing companion and fellow disciple of the Baptist. They had stayed at the junction of the two main paths, to show people to their places, but there being no more pilgrims on the stony path of the mountain, the two have come together to go to the Master with the last offerings received.

Jesus is already bending over sick people and the hosannas of the crowds punctuate each miracle.

The woman, who appears to be completely distressed, dares to pull John's tunic, while he is speaking to Andrew and she smiles.

He bends and asks her: "What do you want, woman?"

"I would like to speak to the Master..."

"Are you not well? You are not poor..."

"I am well and I am not poor. But I need Him...because there are evils without any fever and there is misery without poverty and mine...mine..." and she weeps.

"Listen, Andrew. This woman is sick in heart and would like to speak to the Master. What shall we do?"

Andrew looks at the woman and says: "It is certainly something which is painful to tell..." The woman nods assent. Andrew goes on: "Do not weep...John, try and take her behind our shed. I will take the Master there."

And John, smiling, begs people to let him pass, while Andrew goes in the opposite direction towards Jesus.

But they are noticed by two distressed men, and one of them stops John, and the other Andrew, and shortly afterwards they are both with John and the woman behind the shed of branches which is part of the tent.

Andrew reaches Jesus when the Latter is curing the cripple who raises his crutches like two trophies, as brisk as a skilled dancer, shouting his blessing. Andrew whispers: "Master, behind our shed there are three people weeping. But it is their hearts that ache and their grief cannot be made known..."

"All right. I still have this girl and this woman. Then I will come. Go and tell them to have faith."

Andrew goes away while Jesus is bending over the little girl who is being held once again by her mother. "What is your name?" Jesus asks her.

"Mary."

"And what is My name?"

"Jesus" replies the child.

"And Who am I."

"The Messiah of the Lord Who has come to bring good to bodies and souls."

"Who told you?"

"My mother and father who hope in you for my life."

"Live and be good."

The child, whose spine I think was affected by a disease, because although she is about seven years old, and perhaps older, she only moved her hands and all was enveloped in thick stiff bandages from her armpits down to her hips - they can be seen because her mother has lifted her dress to show them - remains as she was for a few minutes, then begins to slide down from her mother's lap on to the ground and runs towards Jesus Who is curing the woman, whose case I do not understand.

All the sick people have been satisfied and they are the ones who shout most in the crowd applauding "the Son of David, glory of God and ours."

³Jesus goes towards the shed.

Judas of Kerioth shouts: "Master! What about these?"

Jesus turns round and says: "Let them wait where they are. They will be comforted, too" and He walks fast to the back of the shed where the three people in anguish are with Andrew and John.

"The woman first. Come with Me into these hedges. Speak without any fear."

"My Lord, my husband wants to leave me for a prostitute. I have five children and the last one is two years old... Great is my grief... and I am worried about my children... I do not know whether he will take them or leave them to me. He will certainly want the boys, at least the oldest one... And I who bore him will no longer have the joy of seeing him? And what will they think of their father and of me? They must think evil of one of us. And I would not like them to judge their father..."

"Do not weep. I am the Master of Life and of Death. Your husband *will not marry* that woman. Go in peace and continue to be good."

"But... You will not kill him? Oh! Lord, I love him."

Jesus smiles: "I will not kill anyone. But there is someone who will do his work. You must know that the demon is not greater than God. When you go back to your town you will find out that someone killed that evil creature and in such a way that your husband will realise what he was doing and will love you again with revived love."

The woman kisses the hand that Jesus had laid on her head and goes away.

⁴One of the men comes: "I have a daughter, Lord. Unfortunately she went to Tigerish with some girl friends and it was as if she had taken some poison. When she came back to me she was like a mad woman. She wants to go away with a Greek man... and then... Why was she born? Her mother is heartbroken and perhaps will die of grief... I... only Your words, which I heard last winter, keep me from killing her. But, I tell You, my heart has already cursed her."

"No. God, Who is a Father, only curses an accomplished and obstinate sin. What do you want from Mr?"

"That You get her to mend her ways."

"I do not know her and she will certainly not come to Me."

"But You can change her heart also from far away! Do You know who sent me to You? Johanna of Chuza. She was leaving for Jerusalem when I went to her mansion to ask her whether she knew that wretched Greek. I was afraid she might not know him, because she is good, although she lives at Tigerish, but since Chuza has contact with the Gentiles... She does not know him. But she said to me: "Go to Jesus. He called my soul back from very far away and He cured me, by that call, of my phthisis. He will cure also your daughter's heart. I will pray and you must have faith". I have faith. You can see it. Have mercy on me, Master."

"Your daughter this evening will weep on her mother's knees asking to be forgiven. You must be as good as her mother and forgive her. The past is dead."

"Yes, Master. As You wish and may You be blessed."

He turns round to go away... but retraces his steps: "Forgive me, Master... But I am so afraid. Lust is such a demon! Give me a thread of Your tunic. I will put it in my daughter's pillow. The demon will not tempt her while she is asleep."

Jesus smiles and shakes His head... but satisfies the man saying "That your mind may be quieter. But you must believe that when God says: "I want it" the demon goes away without any further need. So keep this as a souvenir of Mine", and He gives him a small tuft from His fringe.

⁵The third man comes: "Master, my father died. We thought he had some money. But we did not find any. That would not matter as my brothers and I are not short of bread. But I lived with my father as I am the eldest. The other two brothers are now accusing me of stealing the money and they want to sue me for theft. You can see my heart. I did not see one single coin. My father kept his money in a coffer in a metal case. When he died, we opened the coffer but the case was no longer there. They say: "Last night, while we were sleeping, you took it". It is not true. Help me to restore peace and esteem among us."

Jesus states at him and smiles.

"Because your father is the guilty one, the guilt of a child who hides his toy lest someone should take it."

"But he was not a miser. Believe me. He was charitable."

"I know. But he was very old... It is the disease of old people... He wanted to preserve things for you, and out of too much love, he caused you to fall out with one another. But the case is buried at the foot of the cellar steps. I am telling you so that you may be aware that I know. While I am speaking to you, by pure chance, your younger brother, by striking the ground angrily, caused it to vibrate and so they discovered it and they are now embarrassed and sorry for blaming you. Go back home with a quiet mind and be good to them. Do not reproach them for their lack of esteem."

"No, my Lord. I will not. But I am not going home, I am staying here to hear You. I will go tomorrow."

"And if they take that money?"

"You say that we must not be greedy. I do not want to be so. It is enough for me if there is peace amongst us. On the other hand... I did not know how much money there was in the case and thus I will not suffer for any information contrary to the truth. And I consider that the money might have been lost... I will live now, as I lived before, should they deny me it. It is enough if they do not call me a thief."

"You are well advanced on the way of God. proceed and peace be with you."

And also that man goes away happily.

⁶Jesus goes back to the crowds, towards the poor people and gives them alms according to His own judgement. Everybody is now happy and Jesus can speak.

"Peace be with you.

I explain the ways of the Lord to you, that you may follow them. Could you follow the path that goes down on the right hand side, and at the same time follow the one on the left hand side? You could not. Because if you take one you must leave the other. Even if the two paths were close together you could not walk any length with one foot in one and one in the other. You would end up by being tired and making a mistake, even if there was a wager. But between the path of God and Satan's there is a great distance, which becomes greater and greater, just like the two paths that come out up here, but as they run down the valley they become farther and farther from each other, as one goes towards Capernaum and the other towards Ptolomais.

Such is life, it bestrides past and future, good and evil. Man is in the centre with his will power and free will; at the ends, on one side there is God and His Heaven, on the other side Satan and his Hell. Man can choose. Nobody forces him. Do not say to Me: "Satan tempts us" as an excuse for descending towards the low path. Also God tempts with His love, which is very strong, with His words, which are most holy, with His promises, which are most alluring! Why then should you allow yourselves to be tempted by one only of the two, by the most undeserving one to be listened to? Are God's words, promises, love not sufficient to counteract Satan's poison?

Consider that that is not to your favour. When a man is physically very healthy, he is not immune from contagion, but overcomes it quite easily. Whereas if a man is already ill and consequently weak, he will almost certainly die in the event of catching a new infection, and if he survives, he is more seriously ill than previously because his blood lacks the strength to kill the contagious germs completely. The same applies to the superior part. If a man is morally and spiritually healthy and strong, you may be sure he is not free from temptations, but evil does not strike roots in him. When I hear anyone say to Me: "I approached this man and that one, I read this book and that one, I endeavoured to persuade this person and that one to do good, but in actual fact the evil which was in their minds and in their hearts, the evil which was in the book, entered my heart", I conclude: "Which proves that you *had already created* within yourself a suitable ground for penetration. Which proves that you are a weakling lacking in moral and spiritual strength. Because we must derive some good also from our enemies. By watching their errors we must learn not to fall into the same. An intelligent man does not become the laughing stock of the first doctrine he hears. A man saturated with a doctrine cannot make room in his mind for any other. This explains the difficulties met when one endeavours to convince those, who are persuaded of other doctrines, to follow the true Doctrine. But

if you admit that you change your mind like a weathercock, I can see that you are thoroughly empty, that your spiritual stronghold is full of breaches, that the dam of your mind is leaking in hundreds of places, through which good water runs out and foul water runs in and you are so stupid and listless that you are not even aware of it and you do not see it. You are a wretch".

Of the two paths, therefore, choose the good one and proceed on it resisting to the allurements of senses, of the world, of science, of the demon. Leave half faiths, compromises, pacts with two people, one opposed to the other, to the men of the world. They, too, should avoid them, if they are honest. At least you, men of God, must shun them. You cannot have them either with God or with Mammon. You must not have them with yourselves either, because they would be of no value. If your actions are a mixture of good and evil, they are of no value whatsoever. The entirely good ones would be cancelled by the bad ones. The evil ones would lead you straight into the Enemy's arms. Therefore do not indulge in them. Be loyal in your service.. No one can serve two masters with two different minds. He will either love one and hate the other or viceversa. You cannot be both of God and of Mammon. The spirit of God cannot be conciliated with the spirit of the world. The former ascends, the latter descends. The former sanctifies, the latter corrupts. And if you are corrupt, how can you act with purity? Senses light up in corrupt people and other lusts follow senses.

⁷You already know how Eve was corrupted and how Adam became corrupt through her. Satan kissed the woman's eyes and bewitched them, so that every aspect, so far pure, became impure for her and roused strange curiosities. Then Satan kissed her ears and opened them to the words of a new science: his own. Also Eve's mind wanted to know what was not necessary. Then Satan showed her eyes and mind, now awake to Evil, what previously they had not seen or understood, and everything in Eve became sharp and corrupt. And the Woman went to the Man, revealed her secret and persuaded Adam to taste of the new fruit, so beautiful to the eye and so strictly forbidden so far. And she kissed him and looked at him with mouth and eyes already fouled by Satan's gloomy disorder. And corruption penetrated Adam who saw, and through his eyes he craved for what was forbidden and he bit it with his helpmate and fell from such height into mud.

A corrupt person will draw another person to corruption, unless the latter is a saint in the true sense of the word.

Watch your eyes, men. Both the eyes of your bodies and the eyes of your minds. If they are corrupt, they can but corrupt all the rest. The eye is the light of the body. Your thought is the light of your heart. But if your eye is not pure - because since the organs are subject to thought, a corrupt thought will corrupt also senses - everything in you will become obscure, and a seducing haze will create impure phantasms in you. Everything is pure in him who has a pure thought which causes a pure look, and the light of God descends as a master where there is no obstruction of senses. But if out of ill will you have accustomed your eyes to disorderly visions, everything will become darkness in you. In vain you will look at the most holy things. In the darkness they will be nothing but blackness and blackness will be the deeds accomplished by you.

⁸Therefore, o children of God, defend yourselves against yourselves. Look after yourselves diligently against all temptations. There is no evil in being tempted. An athlete prepares himself for victory fighting. But it is evil to be overcome because you are not prepared and you are negligent. I know that everything serves as a temptation. I know that defence is exhausting. I know that it is tiring to have to struggle. But think of what you will gain through these things. And for one hour of pleasure, whatever kind it may be, would you like to lose an eternity of peace? What does the pleasure of the flesh, of gold, of thoughts leave you? Nothing. What do you gain by rejecting them? Everything. I am speaking to sinners, because man is a sinner. Well, tell me the truth: after satisfying your senses, your pride, your greed, have you felt fresher, happier, safer? In the hour following your satisfaction, which is always the time of meditation, have you sincerely felt that you were happy? I have never tasted the bread of sensuality. But I will reply in your stead: "No. Languor, unhappiness, uncertainty, nausea, fear, restlessness: that was the juice squeezed out of the hour spent in pleasure".

But I beg you: while I say to you: "Never do that", I also say to you: "Do not be inflexible with those who make mistakes". Remember that you are all brothers, made of one flesh and one soul. Consider that there are many reasons why one is led too sin. Be merciful towards sinners and kindly help them and take them back to God, showing them that the path they have followed is full of dangers for the flesh, the mind and the spirit. Do that and you will receive a great reward... Because the Father Who is in Heaven is merciful to good people and He knows how to give you one hundred fold to one. Now I say to you...

And here Jesus tells me that you must copy the vision dated 12th August 1944, from line 35 to the end, that is the departure of Mary Magdalene.

12th August 1944.

⁹Jesus says: "Look and write. It is the Gospel of Mercy that I give to everybody and in particular to those women who will recognise themselves in the sinner and whom I invite to follow her in her redemption."

¹⁰Jesus is standing on a rock and is speaking to a large crowd. It is a mountainous place. A lonely hill, between two valleys. The top of the hill is shaped like a yoke, or rather, like a camel's hump, so that a few yards from the top there is a natural amphitheatre where voices resound clearly as in a well-built concert hall.

The hill is all in flower. It must be summer. The crops down in the plain are beginning to ripen and are getting ready to be cut. The glacier of a high mountain in the north is shining in the sun. Directly below, to the east, the Sea of Galilee looks like a mirror broken into numberless fragments, each of which is a sapphire lit up by the sun. Its blue-gold twinkling is dazzling and it reflects a few fluffy clouds in a very clear sky and the shadow of some swift sails. Beyond the lake of Gennesaret there is a vast extent of plain ground, which because of a light mist near the earth, caused perhaps by evaporation of dew - in fact it must be early morning as the grass on the mountain still has a few dewy diamonds glittering on its stems - looks like a continuation of the lake with an opal-like hue veined with green. Further back there is a chain of mountains, the side of which is so bizarre as to give the impression of clouds sketched on the clear sky.

Some of the people are sitting on the grass, some on large stones, some are standing. The apostolic college is not complete. I can see Peter and Andrew, John and James, and I can hear the other two being called Nathanael and Philip. Then there is one who is and is not one of the group. Perhaps he is the last one who arrived: they call him Simon. The others are not there, unless they are among the crowds and I cannot see them.

The sermon has already started. I understand that it is the Sermon of the Mount. But the Beatitudes have already been proclaimed. I would say that the sermon is drawing towards the close because Jesus says: "Do that and you will receive a great reward. Because the Father Who is in Heaven is merciful to good people and He knows how to give you one hundred fold to one. So I say to you..."

¹¹There is much excitement amongst the people who crowd round the path leading to the tableau. The people closest to Jesus turn their heads round. Everybody's attention is distracted. Jesus stoops speaking and turns His eyes in the same direction as the others. He is serious and handsome in His dark blue tunic, His arms folded on His chest while the first rays of the sun rising above the eastern peak of the hill shine on His head.

"Make room, you plebeians" shouts the angry voice of a man. "Make room for the beauty who is passing..." and four dandies, smartly dressed, come forward, one of whom is certainly Roman, because he is wearing a Roman toga; they are carrying Mary of Magdala, still a great sinner, triumphantly on their hands, crossed to form a seat.

And she smiles with her beautiful mouth, throwing back her head and her golden hair, which is all plaits and curls held by precious hair-pins and a pale gold leaf strewn with pearls, which encircles the upper part of her forehead like a diadem, from which small light curls hang down to veil her splendid eyes, made larger and more seductive by a refined make-up. The diadem disappears behind her ears, under the mass of plaits at the back of her snow-white completely bare neck. And her nakedness extends much further than her neck. Her shoulders are bare down to her shoulder blades and her breast is even more so. Her dress is held on her shoulders by two little gold chains. It is completely sleeveless. Her body is covered, so to say, by a veil the only purpose of which is to protect her skin from sunburn. The dress is of a very light fabric and when she throws herself back, out of affection, against one or the other of her lovers, she seems to be doing so completely nude. I am under the impression that the Roman is the one she prefers because she glances and smiles at him more frequently and rests her head on his shoulder.

"The desire of the goddess has been satisfied" says the Roman. "Rome has acted as a mount for the new Venus. Over there, there is the Apollo you wanted to see. Seduce Him, therefore... But leave some crumbs of your charm also to us."

Mary laughs and with an agile provoking movement she jumps to the ground, showing her small feet shod in white sandals with golden buckles, as well as a good length of her leg. Then her dress covers her whole body. It is in fact a very wide one of snow-white wool as thin as a veil, held tight at the waist, very low, near her sides, by a large belt made of supple gold bosses. And she stands on the green tableland, where there is a vast amount of lilies of the valley and wild narcissi, like a flower of flesh, an impure flower, which has opened there by witchcraft.

She is more beautiful than ever. Her tiny purple lips seem a carnation opening on the whiteness of her perfect set of teeth. Her face and body would satisfy the most exacting painter or sculptor both because of her complexion and her figure. With her broad breast, her perfectly sized sides, her naturally supple slender waist, as compared with her sides and breast, she does look like a goddess, as the Roman said, a goddess sculptured in a light pinkish marble on the sides of which a fabric is draped and then hangs in the front in a mass of folds. Everything has been devised to please.

Jesus stares at her. And she defiantly resists His look while she smiles and twists lightly as the Roman tickles her, running on her bare shoulders and breast a lily picked among the grass. Mary with affected indignation, lifts her veil saying: "Have respect for my innocence" which causes the four to burst into a guffaw.

Jesus continues staring at her. As soon as the noise of the laughter fades away, Jesus resumes speaking, as if the apparition of the woman had kindled the flame of the sermon, which was losing intensity in its conclusion, and *no longer looks at her*. He looks instead at His audience who seem embarrassed and scandalised at the event.

¹²Jesus says: "I told you to be faithful to the Law, to be humble and merciful, to love not only your brothers by the flesh but also those who are brothers because they were born like you, of man. I told you that forgiveness is better than hostility, that compassion is better than stubbornness. But now I tell you that you must not condemn unless you are free from the fault you wish to condemn. Do not behave like the Scribes and Pharisees who are severe with everybody except themselves, who call impure what is exterior and can only contaminate what is exterior and then they receive impurity in the very depths of their hearts.

God does not stay with the impure. Because impurity corrupts what is the property of God: souls, and in particular the souls of children who are angels spread over the earth. Woe to those who tear off their wings with the cruelty of devilish beasts and throw those flowers of Heaven into the mire, by letting them taste the flavour of material things! Woe... It would be better if they died struck by thunderbolts rather than commit such sin!

Woe to you, rich and fast living people! Because it is amongst you that the greatest impurity thrives and idleness and money are its bed and pillow! You are now sated. The food of concupiscence reaches your throats and chokes you. But you will be hungry. And your hunger will be terrible, insatiable and unappeasable for ever and ever. You are now rich. How much good you could do with your wealth! Instead you do so much harm both to yourselves and to other people. But you will experience a dreadful poverty on a day that will have no end. You now laugh. You think you are triumphing. But your tears will fill the ponds of Gehenna. And they will never cease.

Where does adultery nestle? Where does the corruption of young girls hide? Who has two or three licentious beds, in addition to his own matrimonial one, on which he squanders his money and wastes the strength of a healthy body given to him by God that he may work his, *his* family and not to wear himself out through filthy unions which place him below unclean beasts? You heard that it was said: "You shall not commit adultery". But I tell you that he who looks at a woman lustfully, that she who wished to go with a man, has already committed adultery in his or her heart, *simply by that*. There is *no* reason which can justify fornication. *None*. Neither the abandonment nor the repudiation of a husband. Nor pity for the repudiated woman. You have one soul only. When it is joined to another soul by a pact of faithfulness, it must not lie. Otherwise the beautiful body for which you sin will go with you, o impure souls, into the inexhausted fire. Mutilate your body, rather than fill it for ever by damning it. Come to your moral senses, o rich men, verminous sinks of vice, so that you may not disgust Heaven..."

¹³Mary, who at the beginning listened with a face which was a dream of allurements and irony, sneering now and again, at the end of the sermon becomes livid with rage. She realises that although Jesus does not look at her, He is speaking *to her*. She becomes more and more livid and rebellious and at last can resist no longer.

She spitefully envelops herself in her veil and followed by the glances of the crowds jeering at her and by Jesus' voice which pursues her, she runs down the slope of the mountain, leaving strips of her dress on the thistles and dogrose bushes growing on the edges of the path, laughing out of anger and mockery.

I see nothing else. But Jesus says: "You will see more."

29th May 1945

¹⁴Jesus resumes: "You are indignant at what happened. For two days our shelter, which is well above the mud, has been upset by Satan's hiss. It is therefore no longer a shelter and we will leave it. But I wish to conclude this code of the "most

perfect" in this wide and bright horizon. God really appears here in the majesty of the Creator and watching His marvels we can firmly believe that He and not Satan is the Master. The Evil One could not create even a blade of grass. But God can do everything. This should comfort us. But you are all already in the sun. And that is harmful. Spread out on the slopes where there is shade and it is cool. Have your meals, if you wish so. I will speak to you again on the same subject. Many things have delayed us. But do not be sorry about it. You are with God here."

The crowds shout: "Yes, we are. With You" and they move under the thickets spread on the eastern side so that the slope of the hill and the tree branches shelter them from the sun, which is already too warm.

In the meantime Jesus tells Peter to take the tent down.

"Are we really going away?"

"Yes, we are."

"Because she came?..."

"Yes, but do not tell anybody, especially the Zealot. He would be upset because of Lazarus. I cannot allow the word of God to be mocked at by heathens..."

"I see, I see..."

"Well, there is another thing you must understand."

"Which, Master?"

"That it is necessary to be silent in certain cases. Please do not forget. You are so dear, but you are also so impulsive as to burst out into biting criticism."

"I understand... You do not want for Lazarus and Simon..."

"And for others as well."

"Do You think there will be any today?"

"Today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, always. It will always be necessary to watch the rashness of My Simon of Jonah. Go now and do what I told you."

Peter goes away calling his companions to help him.

¹⁵The Iscariot is pensive in a corner. Jesus calls him three times, but he does not hear. At last he turns round: "Do You want me, Master?" he asks.

"Yes, go and take your food and help your companions."

"I am not hungry. Neither are You."

"Neither am I, but for different reasons. Are you upset, Judas?"

"No, Master. I'm tired..."

"We are now going to the lake and then to Judaea, Judas. To your mother's as I promised you..."

Judas cheers up. "Are You really coming only with me?"

"Of course. Love Me, Judas. I would like My love to be such in you as to preserve you from all evil."

"Master... I am a man. I am not an angel. At times I feel tired. Is it a sin to feel the need of sleep?"

"No, providing you sleep on My chest. Look over there how happy the people are and how beautiful the scenery is from here. Also Judaea must be lovely in springtime."

"Most beautiful, Master. But spring, there, on the mountains, which are higher than here, is later. But there are beautiful flowers. The apple-orchards are magnificent. Mine, which is looked after by my mother, is one of the most beautiful ones. And when she moves about in it, with the doves following her to get some corn, believe me, it is a sight that soothes your heart."

"I believe you. If My Mother is not too tired, I would like to take Her to see yours. They would love each other, because they are both good."

Judas, drawn by this idea, cheers up and forgetting that "he was not hungry and he was tired" runs happily to his companions and tall as he is, he undoes the topmost knots without any trouble and eats his bread and olives, as happy as a child.

¹⁶Jesus looks at him pitifully and then goes towards the apostles.

"Here is some bread, Master. And an egg. I got that rich man over there, the one wearing the red tunic, to give me it. I said to him: "You listen and you are hungry. He speaks and is exhausted. Give me one of your eggs. It will do Him much more good than it would do you"."

"Peter!"

"No, Lord. You are as pale as a baby sucking from an empty breast, and You are becoming as thin as a fish after the mating season. Let me see to it. I do not want to have to reproach myself. I will put it under these warm ashes of the faggots I burnt, and You will eat it. Don't You know it is... how many? most certainly weeks that we have been feeding on bread and olives and a little milk. H'm!... One could say that we are purging ourselves. And You eat less than everybody and speak for everybody. Here is the egg. Take it while it's warm, it will do You good."

Jesus obeys and seeing that Peter is eating bread only, He asks: "And what about you? Where are your olives?"

"Sss! I need them for after. I promised them."

"To whom?"

"To some children. But if they are not quiet until the end, I will eat the olives and give them the stones, that is blows."

"Very good indeed!"

"Ehi! I will never do that. But if we don't say so... I got so many blows myself, and if they had given me all the ones I deserved for all my pranks, I should have had ten times as many! But they do you good. I am like this because I got them."

They all laugh at the apostle's sincerity.

"Master, I would like to remind You that today is Friday and that these people... I do not know whether they will be able to get food in time for tomorrow or reach their homes" says Bartholomew.

"That's true. It is Friday!" several of them say.

"It does not matter. God will provide. But we will tell them."

Jesus stands up and goes to His new place, in the middle of the crowds spread in the thickets. "First of all I wish to remind you that this is Friday. I say that those who are afraid they cannot reach their homes in time and are not in a position to believe that God will provide food for His children tomorrow, should go away at once, so that they will not be still on the road at sunset."

Of all the crowd there, about fifty people get up. All the others stay where they are.

¹⁷Jesus smiles and begins to speak.

"You heard that in the old days it was said: "You shall not commit adultery". Those who among you have heard Me in other places know that I have spoken about that sin several times. Because, look, as far as I am concerned, it is a sin not for one person only, but for two or for three. I will make Myself clear. An adulterer sins with regard to himself, he sins with regard to his accomplice, and sins causing the betrayed wife or husband to sin, they may in fact be led to despair or to commit a crime. That with regard to the accomplished sin. But I will say more. I say: "Not only the accomplished sin, but the desire to accomplish it is already a sin". What is adultery? It is to crave for him, who is not ours, or for her, who is not ours. One begins to sin by wishing, continues by seduction, completes it by persuasion, crowns it by the deed.

How does one begin? Generally with an impure glance. And that is connected with what I said before. An impure eye sees what is concealed from a pure eye and through the eye thirst enters the throat, hunger enters the body and fever the blood. A carnal thirst, hunger, fever. Delirium begins. If the person looked at is honest, the delirious looker-on is left alone on tenterhooks, or will denigrate in revenge. If also the person looked at is dishonest, he will reply to the look and the descent into sin begins.

I therefore say to you: "If a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her because his thought has accomplished the deed of his desire". If your right eye should cause you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to be without one eye than to be thrown into the infernal darkness for ever. And if your right hand should cause you to sin, cut it off and throw it away, for it will do you less harm to lose one part of you than to have your whole body go to hell. It is true that it is written that deformed people cannot serve God in the Temple. But after this life, the deformed by birth who are

holy and those who are deformed out of virtue, will become more beautiful than angels and will serve God, loving Him in the happiness of Heaven.

¹⁸It has also been said to you: "Anyone who divorces his wife, must give her a writ of dismissal". But that is to be condemned, for it does not come from God. God said to Adam: "This is the helpmate I made for you. Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it". And Adam, full of superior intelligence, because sin had not yet dimmed his reason made perfect by God, exclaimed: "This at last is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh. This is to be called woman, that is: another I, because this was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife and the two become one body". And in an increased splendour of light the Eternal Light approved smiling Adam's word, which became the first *indelible* law. Now, if owing to the ever increasing hardness of man, the human lawgiver had to give a new law; if owing to the ever increasing inconstancy of man, the lawgiver had to put a restraint and say: "If you have dismissed her you cannot take her back", that does not cancel the first genuine law, passed in the Earthly Paradise and approved by God.

I say to you: "Whoever divorces his wife, except for the case of fornication, exposes her to adultery". Because what will the divorced woman do in ninety per cent of the cases? She will get married again. With what consequences? Oh! How much there is to be said about that! Do you know that you can cause involuntary incests by such system? How many tears are shed because of lust. Yes: lust. There is no other name for it. Be frank. Everything can be overcome when the spirit is righteous. But everything is an excuse to satisfy sensuality when the spirit is lustful. Woman's frigidity, dullness, ineptitude for housework, shrewish tongue, love for luxury, everything can be overcome, also diseases and irascibility, if one loves holily. But as after some time one does not love as on the first day, what is more than possible is considered impossible and a poor woman is thrown on to the road and to perdition.

He who rejects her commits adultery. He who marries her after the divorce, commits adultery. Death only dissolves a marriage. Remember that. And if your choice is an unhappy one bear the consequences as a cross, being both of you unhappy but holy, without making also the children unhappy, as they are innocent and suffer more because of such unfortunate situations. The love for your children should cause you to ponder one hundred times, also in the case of death of your partner. Oh! I wish you could be satisfied with what you already have had and to which God said: "Enough!" I wish you, widows and widowers, realised that death is not an attenuation but an elevation to the perfections of parents! To be a mother in the place of a dead mother. To be a father in the place of a deceased father. To be two souls in one and receive the love for the children from the cold lips of the dying partner and say: "Go in peace, without worrying for those who were born of you. I will continue to love them, on my own and on your behalf, I will love them twice and will be their father and mother and they will not suffer the unhappiness of orphans, neither will they feel the inborn jealousy that the children of a remarried consort experience with regard to him or her who takes the sacred place of mother or father called by God to a new abode".

¹⁹My children, My sermon is drawing to its end, as the day is nearing its end while the sun is setting in the west. I want you to remember the words of this meeting on the mountain. Engrave them in your hearts. Read them over and over again and very often. Let them be your everlasting guidance. And above all be good to those who are weak. Do not judge that you may not be judged. Remember that the moment might come when God could remind you: "That is how you judged. So you knew that that was bad. *You therefore committed a sin, knowing what you were doing.* You must now pay for it".

Charity is an absolution. Be charitable to everybody and in everything. If God gives you much assistance to keep you good, do not be proud of it. But endeavour to climb the full length of the ladder of perfection and give a hand to those who are tired or unaware and to those who are easily disappointed. Why do you observe so diligently the splinter in your brother's eye if first you do not go to the trouble of taking the plank out of your own eye? How dare you say to your brother: "Let me take the splinter out of your eye" while the plank in your eye is blinding you? Son, do not be a hypocrite. Take the plank out of your own eye first and then you will be able to take the splinter out of your brother's eye, without ruining him.

As you avoid being uncharitable, avoid also being imprudent. I said to you: "Give a hand to those who are tired or unaware and to those who are easily disappointed". But if it is charity to teach the ignorant, to encourage the tired, to give new wings to those whose old ones are broken, it is imprudence to reveal the eternal truths to those affected by satanism, who take possession of them to pretend they are prophets, to insinuate themselves among simple people, to corrupt, lead astray and sacrilegiously foul the things of God. Absolute respect, to be able to speak, to be silent, to ponder, to act, are the virtues of the true disciple in order to make proselytes and serve God. You are gifted with the faculty of reason and, if you are just, God will grant you all the light to make a better use of your reason. You must consider that the eternal truths are like pearls, and no one has ever seen pearls thrown in front of pigs, which prefer acorns and rank broth to precious pearls, which they could crush

under their feet and then, furious at being mocked at, they would turn against you to tear you to pieces. Do not give dogs what is holy. That is for the present and the future.

I have told you much, My children. Listen to My words; he who listens to them and puts them into practice, can be compared to a thoughtful man, who wishing to build a house, chose a rocky place. He certainly worked hard to lay the foundations. He had to work with pick and stone chisel, he got callous hands and broke his back. But he was able to put lime in the fissures of the rock and lay bricks one close to the other, like the wall of a fortress, and the house was as solid as a mountain. The house was exposed to the inclemency of the weather and to downpours, the rain caused the rivers to overflow their banks, the winds whistled, the waves beat it, but the house resisted everything. Such is he who has a sound faith. Instead who listens superficially and does not strive to engrave My words in his heart, because he is aware that to do so he would have to work hard, suffer and extirpate too many things, is like a man who out of indolence and foolishness builds his house on sand. As soon as the inclement weather comes, the house quickly built, quickly collapses and the forlorn fool contemplates the rubble of the house and the ruin of his capital. And in that case the ruin can be repaired with expenses and work. But if the edifice of the spirit crashes, because it was badly built, there is no way to rebuild it. One cannot build in future life. Woe to those who present themselves there with rubble!

²⁰I have finished. I am now going down towards the lake and I bless you in the name of the One and Triune God. May peace be with you."

But the crowds shout: "We are coming with You. Let us come. No one has words like Yours!" And they begin to follow Jesus Who goes down on the opposite side from which He came up and which is in the direction of Capernaum.

The descent is steeper but faster and they soon reach the foot of the mountain on a green flowery plain.

(Jesus says: "Enough for today. Tomorrow...")

175. The Leper Cured at the Foot of the Mountain.

30th May 1945

¹Amongst the many flowers which perfume the earth and delight our eyes, I see the horrible spectre of a revolting, corroded leper, completely covered with sores.

The crowds shout with fear and rush back to the lower slopes of the mountain. Some of them gather stones to throw at the rash man.

But Jesus turns round with His arms fully stretched out and shouts: "Peace! Stay where you are: be not afraid. Put the stones down. Have mercy on a poor brother. He is a son of God, too."

The crowds obey, overwhelmed by the power of the Master, Who moves forward through the tall grass in bloom to a few steps from the leper, who, on his part, has understood that Jesus is protecting him, and has come nearer.

When he reaches Jesus, he prostrates himself, and the blooming grass envelops him like cool scented water. The flowers undulate and gather together, forming a veil over the miserable man concealed amongst them. Only the mournful voice that can be heard reminds people of the wretched creature lying there. It says: "Lord, if You want, You can cure me. Have mercy also on me!"

Jesus replies: "Raise your head and look at Me. A man who believes in Heaven must be able to look at it. And you do believe, because you are asking for a grace."

The grass is shaken and opens out once again. Like the head of a shipwrecked person emerging from the sea, the head of the leper appears, stripped of hair and beard. His head is a skull not yet entirely deprived of all flesh.

And yet Jesus does not disdain touching that forehead with the tips of His fingers, where there are no sores on the skin. But the skin on that spot is ashen-grey, scaly, and lies between two putrid erosions, one of which has destroyed his scalp, and the other has opened a hole where his right eye was, so that I could not say whether the ball of his eye is still in the huge socket, which, between his temple and his nose, lays bare his cheek-bone and his nasal cartilage, full of corruption. And Jesus, holding the fingertips of His lovely hand there, says: "I want it. Be cleansed."

And as if the man were not eaten away and covered with sores, but only covered with dirt on which cleansing waters were poured, the leprosy disappears at once. First the wounds heal; then his skin becomes clear, his right eye appears between fresh eyelids, his lips close round his yellowish teeth. Only his hair and beard are missing, that is, there are only scanty tufts of hair where previously there was only a tiny piece of wholesome skin.

The crowds shout in amazement. And their joyful shouts tell the man that he is cured. He lifts his hands, so far concealed by the grass, he touches his eye, where the huge hole was; he touches his head, where the large sore showed the skull and feels his fresh skin. He stands up, looks at his chest, his hips... He is all wholesome and clean... He collapses once again on the flowery meadow weeping out of joy.

"Do not weep. Stand up and listen to Me. Go back to life according to the rite and do not tell anybody until you have accomplished it. Show yourself to the priest as soon as possible, make the offering prescribed by Moses as evidence of your miraculous cure."

"It's for You that I should witness, my Lord!"

"You will witness for Me by loving My doctrine! Go."

The crowd has come close once again and they congratulate the man miraculously healed, although from due distance. There are some people who feel they ought to give him some provisions for his journey and throw some coins to him. Others throw bread and foodstuffs, and a man, seeing that the leper's clothes are nothing but torn rags, through which his entire body is visible, takes his mantle off, ties it in a knot, as if it were a large handkerchief, and throws it to the leper who can thus cover himself decently. Another man, as charity is contagious when it is in common, cannot resist his desire to supply him with sandals, takes off his own and throws them to the leper.

"And what about you?" asks Jesus Who saw the gesture.

"Oh! I live nearby. I can walk barefooted. He has to go a long way."

"May God bless you and all those who have helped our brother. Man: you will pray for them."

"Yes, I will, I will pray for them and for You; that the world may have faith in You."

"Goodbye. Go in peace."

The man walks away a few yards, then turns round and shouts: "Can I tell the priest that You have cured me?"

"It is not necessary. Just say: "The Lord had mercy on me". It is the whole truth and nothing else is required."

²The people throng round the Master, forming a circle which does not want to open at any cost. But the sun has set and the Sabbath rest begins. The villages are far away. But the people do not pine for their villages, their food or anything else. But the apostles are worried about it and they tell Jesus. Also the elder disciples are worried. There are women and children, and while the night is mild and the grass of the meadow is soft, the stars are not bread, neither do stones become food.

Jesus is the only one who does not trouble. The people in the meantime eat the remnants of their food without any worry and Jesus points it out to His apostles: "I solemnly tell you that these people are worth more than you are! Look how thoughtlessly they are finishing everything. I said to them: "Who cannot believe that God will provide food for His children tomorrow, may go away", and they stayed. God will not belie His Messiah and will not disappoint those who hope in Him."

The apostles shrug their shoulders and do not show concern for anything else.

It is nightfall after a placid, beautiful red sunset and the silence of the country spreads over everything, after the last choir of birds. There is a light whispering of the wind and then the first mute flight of a night bird, the first star appears and a frog croaks.

The children are already asleep. The adults are talking among themselves and now and again someone goes to the Master asking for clarification of some point or other. So no one is surprised when a person, imposing by look, garments and age, is seen coming along a path between two corn fields. Some men are following him. Everybody turns round to look at him and they point him out to one another whispering. The whispering spreads from one group to another, it revives and fades away. The groups that are farther away come near drawn by curiosity.

³The noble looking man reaches Jesus, Who is sat at the foot of a tree listening to some men, and bows down before Him. Jesus stands up at once and responds with equal respect to the salutation. The people present are watching attentively.

"I was up on the mountain and perhaps You thought that I did not have faith as I went away for fear of having to fast. But I went away for another reason. I wanted to be a brother among brothers, the eldest brother. I would like to speak to You aside. Can You listen to me? Although a scribe, I am not Your enemy."

"Let us move away a little..." and they go into the corn field.

"I wanted to provide some food for the pilgrims and I came down to tell the baker to bake bread for a large crowd. You can see that I am at a legal distance, because these fields belong to me, and it is lawful to walk from here to the top on a Sabbath. It was my intention to come up tomorrow with my servants. But I found out that You are here with the crowd. I beg You to allow me to provide for the Sabbath. Otherwise I would be very sorry that I had to forego Your words for nothing."

"For nothing, no, never, because the Father would have compensated you with His light. But I thank you and will not disappoint you. I only wish to point out that the crowd is very large."

"I asked them to heat all the ovens, also the ones used to dry foodstuffs and I will succeed in having bread for everybody."

"I did not mean that. I was referring to the quantity of bread..."

"That does not trouble me. Last year I had a good crop of corn. You have seen what the ears of corn are like this year. Let me do it. It will be the greatest protection for my fields. After all, Master... You gave me such bread today... You really are the Bread of the spirit!..."

"Let it be done as you wish. Let us go and tell the pilgrims."

"No. You said so."

"Are you a scribe?"

"Yes, I am."

"May the Lord take you where your heart deserves."

"I understand what You mean but do not say. You mean: to the Truth. Because great are our errors... and our ill-will."

"Who are you?"

"A son of God. Pray the Father for me. Goodbye."

"Peace be with you."

⁴Jesus goes slowly back to His apostles while the man goes away with his servants.

"Who was he? What did he want? Did he say something unpleasant to You? Has he sick people?" Jesus is assailed with questions.

"I do not know who he is. Or rather, I know that he is good-hearted and that..."

"He is John, the scribe" says one of the crowd.

"Well, I know now, because you said so. He only wanted to be the servant of God with his children. Pray for him because tomorrow we shall all have food, thanks to his goodness."

"He is really a just man" says one.

"Yes, indeed. I do not know how he can be the friend of others" remarks another one.

"He is swathed in scruples and rules like a baby, but he is not a bad man" concludes a third one.

"Do these fields belong to him?" ask many who are not from this part of the country.

"Yes, they do. I think that the leper was one of his servants or peasants. But he allowed him to stay around here and I think that he also fed him."

⁵The comments continue but Jesus does not pay attention to them. He calls the Twelve near Him and asks them: "And what should I say now in regard to

your incredulity? Did the Father not put bread for all of us into the hands of one who, by caste, is an enemy of Mine? Oh! men of little faith!... Go into the soft hay and sleep. I am going to pray the Father that He may open your hearts and to thank Him for His kindness. Peace be with you."

And He goes to the lower slopes of the mountain. He sits down and collects His thoughts in prayer. When He raises His eyes He sees the myriad of stars crowding the sky, when He lowers them, He sees the crowd of people sleeping on the meadows. Nothing else. But such is the joy in His heart that His face seems to become transfigured by a bright light...

183 Jesus at Magdala. He Meets with Mary Magdalene the Second Time.

12th August 1944.

¹The entire apostolic college is round Jesus. Sitting on the grass, in the cool shade of a thicket, near a stream, they are all eating bread and cheese and drinking the cool clear water of the stream. Their dusty sandals give to understand that they have walked a long way and perhaps the disciples wish but to rest on the long fresh grass.

But the Tireless Walker is not of the same mind. As soon as he deems that the hottest hour is over, He gets up, goes on to the road and looks... He then turns round and says: "Let us go." Nothing else.

When they reach a crossroads, where four dusty roads meet, Jesus resolutely takes the one in a north-east direction.

"Are we going back to Capernaum?" asks Peter.

Jesus replies: "No." Just: no.

"We are going to Tigerish, then" insists Peter, who is *anxious to know*."

"Not there either."

"But this road takes one to the Sea of Galilee... and Tigerish and Capernaum are there..."

"And there is also Magdala" says Jesus with a half-serious expression to satisfy Peter's curiosity.

"Magdala? Oh!..." Peter is somewhat scandalised, which makes me think that the town is ill-famed.

"Yes, to Magdala. Do you consider yourself too honest to enter that town? Peter, Peter!... For My sake you will have to enter not towns of pleasure but real brothels... Christ did not come to save those who are already saved, but *those who are lost*... and you shall be "Peter", or Rock, not Simon *for that purpose*. Are you afraid of becoming contaminated? No! Not even this one, see (and He points at the very young John) will suffer any harm. Because *he does not want*, as you *do not want*, as your brother and John's brother *do not want*, as none of you, *for the time being*, wants. *As long as one does not want, no harm is done*. But one *must not want resolutely and perseveringly*. *You will obtain will-power and perseverance from the Father, by praying with sincere intentions*. Not all of you will be able to pray thus, in future... What are you saying Judas? Do not be too self-confident. I, Who am the Christ, constantly pray to have strength against Satan. Are you better than I am? *Pride is the opening through which Satan penetrates*. Be vigilant and humble, Judas. Matthew, since you are familiar with this place, tell Me: is it better to go to the town this way, or is there another road?"

"It depends, Master. If You want to go to the area of Magdala where fishermen and poor people live, this is the road. But - I do not think this is the case but I am telling You to give You a complete answer - if You want to go where the rich people are, then in about one hundred yards, You have to leave this road and take another one, because their houses are approximately in this direction and it is necessary to go back..."

"We will go back because I want to go to the residential area of the wealthy people. What did you say, Judas?"

"Nothing, Master. It is the second time that You ask me in a very short time. But I have never spoken."

"Not with your lips, no. But you have spoken, grumbling in your heart. You have grumbled with your guest: your heart. *It is not necessary to have an interlocutor, in order to speak*. *We say many words to ourselves But we must not moan or calumniate, not even with your own ego*."

²The group proceeds in silence. The main road becomes a town street, paved with one handbreadth wide square stones. The houses are more and more splendid and magnificent, surrounded by luxuriant flourishing gardens and orchards. I am under the impression that the elegant Magdala was for the Palestinians a kind of place of pleasure like some towns around our lakes in Lombardy: Stresa, Gardone, Pallanza, Bellagio and so on. Among the rich Palestinians there are many Romans, who must have come from other places, such as Tigerish or Caesarea, possibly officials of the Governor or merchants who export to Rome the most beautiful products of the Palestinian colony.

Jesus proceeds, sure of Himself, as if He knew where to go. He follows the contour of the lake, which reflects the houses and gardens built on its limits.

A loud noise of crying people can be heard from a sumptuous house. It is the voices of women and children. The shrill voice of a woman shouts: "My son! My son!"

Jesus turns round and looks at His apostles. Judas steps forward. "No, not you" orders Jesus. "You, Matthew. Go and find out."

Matthew goes and comes back: "A brawl, Master. A man is dying. A Jew.. The man who wounded him, a Roman, has run away. His wife, mother and children have rushed to help him... But he is dying."

"Let us go."

"Master... Master... It happened in the house of a woman... who is not his wife."

"Let us go."

Through the wide open door they enter a large hall which opens on to a lovely garden. The house seems to be divided by this kind of covered peristyle, which is full of pots with green plants, statues and inlaid articles. It is a mixture of a hall and greenhouse. In a room, the door of which opens on to the hall, there are some women weeping. Jesus goes in confidently. But He does not pronounce His usual greeting.

Among the men present there is a merchant who obviously knows Jesus, because as soon as he sees Him, he says: "The Rabbi of Nazareth!" and greets Him respectfully.

"Joseph, what is the matter?"

"Master, a stab wound in his heart... He is dying."

"Why?"

³A grey-haired unkempt woman stands up - she was kneeling near the dying man holding his limp hand - and with distracted face and voice she shouts: "Because of her, because of her... She has turned him into a devil... Mother, wife, children no longer existed for him! Hell will have you Satan!"

Jesus looks up and His eyes follow the trembling accusing hand and in a corner, against the dark red wall, He sees Mary of Magdala, more immodest than ever, wearing, I would say, nothing on half of her body, because she is half naked from the waist upwards, draped in a kind of hexagonal net decorated with little round objects which look like tiny pearls. But as she is in a half-light, I cannot see her well.

Jesus lowers His eyes once again. Mary, lashed by His indifference, stands up, whereas before she seemed somewhat depressed, and strikes a defiant pose.

"Woman" says Jesus to the mother. "Do not curse. Tell Me. Why was your son in this house?"

"I told You. Because she infatuated him. She did."

"Silence. So, he was in sin, too, because he is an adulterer and an unworthy father of these innocent children. He therefore deserves his punishment. In this life and in the next one *there is no mercy for those who do not repent*. But I feel sorry for your grief and for these innocent children. Is your house far?"

"About one hundred yards."

"Lift the man and take him there."

"It is not possible, Master" says Joseph, the merchant. "He is breathing his last."

"Do as I tell you."

⁴They place a board under the body of the dying man and the procession slowly moves out. They cross the street and go into a shady garden. The women go on crying loudly.

As soon as they enter the garden, Jesus addresses the mother. "Can you forgive? If you forgive, God will forgive. We must be kind-hearted, to obtain grace. He has sinned and will sin again. It would be better for him to die, because, if he lives, he will fall into sin again and he will have to answer also for his ingratitude to God Who has saved him. But you and these innocent ones (and He points at the wife and children) would give yourselves up to despair. I have come to save, not to lose. Man, I tell you: stand up and be cured."

The man begins to recover. He opens his eyes, sees his mother, wife and children and lowers his head shamefully.

"Son, son" says the mother. "You were dead, if He had not saved you. Come to your senses.. Don't be infatuated for a..."

Jesus interrupts the old woman. "Be quiet, woman. Have mercy, as mercy was granted to you. Your house has been sanctified by a miracle, *which is always the evidence of God's presence*. That is why I could not work it where there was sin. You, at least, must endeavour to keep it such, even if he will not. Take care of him now. It is fair that he should suffer a little.

Be good, woman. And you. And you little ones. Goodbye." Jesus has laid His hand on the heads of the two women and of the children.

He then goes out passing in front of the Magdalene who followed the procession as far as the entrance of the house where she remained leaning against a tree. Jesus slackens His pace as if He were waiting for His disciples, but I think He does so to give Mary a chance of making a gesture. But she does not.

The disciples reach Jesus and Peter cannot help muttering between his teeth an epithet appropriate to Mary, who, wishing to strike an attitude, bursts into a laugh of a weak triumph. But Jesus heard Peter's word and addresses him severely: "Peter. I do not insult. Do not insult. Pray for sinners. Nothing else."

Mary stops her trilling laughter, lowers her head and runs away, like a gazelle, towards her house.

230. Jesus and Martha at Capernaum.

27th July 1945.

¹Jesus, hot and covered with dust, goes back to the house in Capernaum with Peter and John.

He has just entered the kitchen garden and is going towards the kitchen, when the landlord calls Him familiarly saying: "Jesus, that lady of whom I spoke to You at Bethsaida, has come again looking for You. I told her to wait and I took her to the room upstairs."

"Thank you, Thomas. I will go to her at once. If the others come tell them to wait here." And Jesus goes upstairs immediately, without even taking off His mantle.

On the terrace at the top of the staircase there is Marcella, Martha's maid. She is standing there alone. "Oh! Master. My mistress is inside. She has been waiting for You for so many days" says the woman kneeling down to worship Jesus.

"I rather thought that. I will go to her at once. May God bless you, Marcella."

Jesus lifts the curtain protecting the room from the excessively bright sunshine, for although the sun is now setting, it is still very warm and the white houses in Capernaum seem to be ablaze in the red glare of a huge brazier. In the room, sitting near the window is Martha, enveloped in a mantle and covered with a veil. She is perhaps contemplating the part of the lake where a woody hill protrudes into the water forming a promontory. Perhaps she is only contemplating her own thoughts. She is certainly absorbed in thought and in fact she does not hear the light shuffling of the feet of Jesus who is walking towards her. And she starts when He calls her.

"Oh! Master!" she exclaims. And she falls on her knees, with outstretched arms, as if she were imploring help and then she bends so low as to touch the floor with her forehead, and she bursts into tears.

"What is the matter? Stand up. Why are you weeping so bitterly? Have you some misfortune to tell Me? You have? What is it? Do you know that I was at Bethany? You do? And I was told that there was good news. But now you are weeping... What happened?" and He compels her to stand up and makes her sit on a bench against the wall, while He sits in front of her. "Now, take off your veil and mantle, as I am doing. You must be suffocating under them. And I want to see the face of My dear Martha, who is so upset, so that I may disperse all the clouds perturbing it."

Martha obeys, still weeping, and her flushed face and swollen eyes can now be seen.

"Well? I will help you. Mary sent for you. She wept very much, she wanted to know many things about Me, and you thought that that was a good sign, so much so that you wanted Me to come to complete the miracle. And I have come. And now?..."

²"Now, nothing, Master! I was mistaken. Too keen a desire makes one see what does not exist... I made You come for nothing... Mary is worse than before... No! What am I saying? I am calumniating her, I am telling lies. She is not worse, because she does not want any more men around her. She is different, but still so bad. She seems to be mad... I no longer understand her... At least before I understood her. But now! Who can understand her?" and Martha weeps desolately.

"Now, calm down and tell Me what she does. Why is she bad? So, she does not want any more men around her. So I suppose that she leads a retired life at home. Is that so? It is? Good. That is very good. The fact that she wanted you to stay with her, as if she wanted to be defended against temptations - that is what you wrote - and the fact that she wanted to avoid temptations by shunning guilty acquaintances or what might lead to such relationship, are signs of good will."

"Do You think so, Master? Do You really think that?"

"Of course I do. So why do you think that she is bad? Tell Me what she does..."

"Well." Martha, who is somewhat encouraged by Jesus' certainty, speaks more calmly. "Well. Since I came here, Mary has never left the house or the garden, not even to go out on the lake in her boat. And her nurse told me that even before I came, she hardly ever went out. Apparently this change began at Passover. But before my arrival, some people used to come and see her and did not always refuse to see them. Sometimes she gave instructions not to let anybody pass. And it appeared to be a standing order. But then she would go as far as striking the servants, motivated by unjust anger, if upon hearing the voices of visitors, she went to the hall and found out that they had already been sent away. However, she has not done that again, since I came. The first night she said to me, and that is why I was so hopeful: "Hold me back, if necessary tie me. But don't let me go out, don't let me see anybody but you and my nurse. Because I am not well and I want to recover. But those who come to me or want me to go to them, are like feverish marshes. And they make me grow worse. But their appearance is so handsome, so flowery and joyful, their fruit is so pleasant looking, that I cannot resist them, because I am a poor wretch. Your sister is weak, Martha. And some people take advantage of her weakness to make her do foul things, to which a part of me does not agree. The only part which is still left to me of my poor mother..." and she wept. And I did that. I did it kindly when she was reasonable; but I acted firmly when she looked like a wild beast in a cage. She never rebelled against me. On the contrary, when the worst moments of temptation are over, she comes and weeps at my feet, resting her head on my lap and she says: "Forgive me, forgive me!" and if I ask her: "For what, sister? You have not grieved me", she replies: "Because a little while ago, or yesterday evening, when you said to me: 'You are not going out from here', I hated and cursed you in my heart and I wished you would die". Is she not to be pitied, my Lord? Is she perhaps mad? Has her vices made her mad? I think that one of her lovers has given her a philtre to make her a slave of his lust and that its poison has gone to her brains..."

³"No. It is not a question of philtres or madness. It is something quite different. But go on."

"So she is respectful and obedient to me. And she has not ill-treated the servants any more. But after the first evening, she has not asked anything else about You. and if I mention You, she changes the subject. But she sits for hours and hours on a rock where the belvedere is, looking at the lake, until she becomes dazzled, and every time a boat sails by she asks me: "Do you think it is the boat of the Galilean fishermen?" She never mentions Your Name or the names of the apostles. But I know that she thinks of You and of them in Peter's boat. And I realise that she thinks of You because sometimes in the evening, when we are walking in the garden or before going to bed, and I am doing needlework, while she does nothing, she says to me: "Is that how one must live according to the doctrine you follow?" And sometimes she weeps, sometimes she laughs sarcastically, like a mad person or a demon. On other occasions she lets down her hair, which is always arranged so artistically, and she makes two plaits, she puts on one of my dresses and then she comes to me, with her plaits behind her back or in front of her, modest and young looking in my high-necked dress, and also because of her plaits and countenance and she says to me: "Is that what Mary should be like?" and even then sometimes she weeps kissing her wonderful plaits, which are as thick as her arms and reach down to her knees, the living gold which was my mother's pride, at times, instead, she laughs in her ghastly way or she says to me: "Look, I had rather do this and be done with it" and she ties her plaits round her neck and pulls them tight until her face becomes purple, as if she wanted to strangle herself. At times she pities or ill-treats herself, and that obviously happens when she feels the temptations of her flesh more fiercely. I have caught her striking her breast and scratching her face savagely or banging her head against a wall and when I asked her: "Why are you doing that?" she would look at me with a wild deranged expression saying: "To tear myself, my bowels, my head to pieces. Cursed harmful things must be destroyed. And I am destroying myself". And if I speak to her of God's mercy, of You - because I still speak to her of You, as if she were the most faithful of Your women disciples, and I swear to You that at times I am horrified at mentioning Your name in her presence - she replies: "There can be no mercy for me. I have gone beyond the limit". She is then seized by a fit of despair and shouts, beating herself till she draws blood: "Why have I this monster that tears me to pieces? And it gives me no peace. And it leads me to evil deeds by means of sweet singing voices, to which it then adds the cursing voices of my father and mother, of you and Lazarus, because you and Lazarus curse me, too, and Israel curses me and it makes me hear them to drive me mad..." When she says that, I reply to her: "Why are you worried about Israel, which is only a people, and you do not think of God? But since you trampled on everything without considering what you were doing, endeavour now to overcome everything and do not worry about worldly things, but care only for God, your father and mother. If you change your life, they will not curse you, but will stretch their arms out to you..." And she listens to me, pensive, astonished as if I were telling her an unreal story, and then she weeps... But does not reply. At times, instead she orders the servants to bring her wines and drugs and she eats and drinks those artificial nourishments and explains: "I do that to forget: Now, since she found out that You are here in the lake area, every time she sees me come to You, she says" "I will come sometime, too" and laughing in that manner which is an insult to herself, she concludes: "Thus the eye of God will fall also upon manure". But I do not want her to come. And now, when I want to come, I wait until she falls asleep, when she is exhausted with being angry, with drinking and weeping... with everything. Also today I ran away like that, so that I can go back at night before she awakes. That is my life... I no longer hope..." and she resumes weeping more bitterly than previously, as her tears are no longer restrained by the effort of speaking calmly.

⁴"Do you remember, Martha, what I told you once? "Mary is ill". You did not want to believe it. Now you can see it. You say that she is mad. She says herself that she is ill and suffers from a sinful fever. I say: she is ill because she is possessed by a demon. It is still a disease. And her incoherent behaviour, her fury, her tears, her affliction, her longing for Me are stages of her illness, which has come to a moment of crisis and has its most violent fluctuations. You are doing the right think in being good to her and patient with her. You are right in speaking to her of Me. Do not be disgusted at mentioning My Name in her presence. Poor soul of My Mary! Her soul also was created by the Father and it is in no way different from all other souls, from yours, from Lazarus', from the souls of the apostles and disciples. Her soul also was included and foreseen to be amongst the souls for whom I became flesh in order to be their Redeemer. In actual fact I have come more for her than for you, Lazarus, the apostles and disciples. Poor soul of My Mary, who is suffering so much! Of My poor Marry who has been poisoned with seven poisons besides the first universal poison! Of My imprisoned Mary! But let her come to Me! Let her breathe the air I breathe, let her hear My voice and meet My glance!... She calls herself: "Manure... Oh! My poor dear soul in whom the demon of pride is the weakest of the seven possessing her! Only because of that she will be saved!"

⁵"And if she should find someone who may lead her astray once again, when she comes out? She is afraid of that herself..."

"And she will always be afraid of that, now that she has gone so far as to loathe vice. But be not afraid. When a soul already has the desire of coming to God, and is held back only by the diabolic Enemy, who is aware that he is going to lose his prey, and by the personal enemy of one's ego, which reasons in a human way and judges itself in a human way, ascribing to God its own judgement to prevent the soul from controlling the human ego, then that soul is already strong enough against the attacks of vice and of vicious people. It has found the Polar Star and will no longer deviate. And do not say to her again: "You have not thought of God and You are instead thinking of Israel?" It is an implicit reproach. Do not do that. She has just come out of a fire. She is one big sore. Touch her lightly only with balms of kindness, of forgiveness and hope... Leave her free to come. You must tell her when you are thinking of coming, but do not say to her: "Come with me". On the contrary, if you understand that she wants to come, do not come yourself. Go back and wait for her at home. She will come back to you broken by Mercy. Because I must remove the wicked power that is holding her and for a few hours she will look like a woman whose veins have been cut or whose bones have been removed by a doctor. But later she will feel better. She will be dumbfounded. She will be in great need of caresses and silence. Assist her as if you were her second guardian angel: without letting her perceive your presence. And if you see her weeping, let her weep. And if you hear her asking herself questions, leave her alone. And if you see her smile, and then become serious, and then smile once more in a different way, with a different look, with a different countenance, do not ask her questions, do not make her feel uneasy. She is suffering more now, ascending, than she did, descending. And she must *ascend by herself*, as she descended by herself. She could not bear you to look at her when she was descending, because your eyes were full of reproach. And she cannot bear you to look at her now that her sense of shame has been aroused at last. Then she was strong, because Satan, her master, was with her and a wicked strength supported her and she could challenge the world, and yet she could not bear to be seen by you in her sin. Now Satan is no longer her master. He is still a guest in her, but Mary's will is holding him by the throat. And she has not Me yet. That is why she is too weak. She cannot even bear your caressing sisterly eyes watching her confession to her Saviour. All her energy is employed and consumed in holding the septuple demon by the throat. For all the rest she is defenceless and unclothed. But I will reclothe her and fortify her. Go in peace, Martha. And tomorrow tell her tactfully that I shall be speaking near the torrent of the Fountain, here in Capernaum, after vesper. Go in peace. I bless you."

⁶Martha is still perplexed.

"Do not become incredulous, Martha" says Jesus Who is watching her.

"No, my Lord. But I was thinking... Oh! Give me something that I may give Mary, to give her a little strength... She is suffering so much... and I am so afraid that she may not be able to triumph over the demon!"

"You are a little girl! Mary has Me and you. Can she possibly not succeed? However, take this. Give me your hand, which has never sinned, and has always been kind, merciful, active and pious. It has always made gestures of love and prayer. It has never been lazy or idle or corrupt. Now, I will hold it between My hands to make it even holier. Raise it against the demon and he will not endure it. And take this belt of Mine. Never part with it. And every time you see her, say to yourself: "The power of Jesus is stronger than this belt of Jesus and by it everything can be overcome: demons and monsters as well. I must not be afraid". Are you happy now? My peace be with you. Go in peace."

Martha worships Him and goes out.

Jesus smiles when he sees her climb on to the wagon, which Marcella has called to the gate, and depart towards Magdala.

232. Parable of the Lost Sheep.

12th August 1944.

¹Jesus is speaking to the crowds. Standing on the wooded embankment of a little torrent, He is addressing a large crowd spread in a field where the corn has already been cut and the burnt stubbles are a distressing sight. It is evening. Night is falling, but the moon is already rising. Flocks of sheep are going back to the folds and the sound of cattle-bells mingles with the loud chirping of crickets and the high-pitched drone of cicadas. Jesus takes the passing flocks as a starting point.

He says: "Your Heavenly Father is like a solicitous shepherd. What does a good shepherd do? He looks for good pastures for his sheep, where there is no hemlock or other poisonous herbs, but there is plenty sweet clover, aromatic mint and bitter but wholesome chicory. He looks for places where beside good grass there is the cool shade of trees and the clear water of a stream and he ensures that there are no asps among the green grass. He does not prefer the richest pastures, because he knows that snakes and harmful herbs are quite common there and thus dangerous for his sheep. He prefers instead mountain pastures, where the dew keeps the grass clean and fresh and the strong sunshine keeps snakes away and the breezy air is light and healthy, not like the unhealthy air in the plains. The good shepherd watches his sheep one by one. He cures them when they are sick and if they get hurt he dresses their wounds. He reproaches the sheep that might be sick because they are too greedy for food and he calls to a different place the ones that might be harmed by staying too long in a damp spot or in the sunshine. And if one is unwilling to eat he looks for acidulous aromatic herbs suitable to whet its appetite and he feeds it with his own hands, speaking to it as if it were a friend. That is what the good Father Who is in Heaven does with His children wandering on the earth. His love is the staff that gathers them together, His voice is their guide, His Law is His pasture, Heaven His fold.

²But one of his sheep left him. How fond of it he was! It was young, pure, white, like a cloud in an April sky. The shepherd used to look at it with so much love, thinking of how much good he could do for it and how much love he could receive from it. And it strayed. A tempter passed on the road that runs along the pasture. He does not wear a plain jacket, but has on a many-coloured robe. He does not have a leather belt with hatchet and knife hanging from it, but he wears a golden belt, from which little bells hang, as sweet-sounding as the singing of a nightingale, and phials of inebriating scents... He does not carry a shepherd's staff as the good shepherd does, to gather the sheep together and defend them and should his staff not be sufficient, he is ready to defend them with his hatchet and knife and even with his life. But the tempter who is passing by, is holding in his hands a thurible sparkling with gems and from it smoke rises, which is stench and scent at the same time, and it bewilders as the sparkling of the fake jewels dazzles. He passes by singing and drops handfuls of salt, which shines on the dark road... Ninety-nine sheep look and remain where they are. The one hundredth, the youngest and dearest one, makes a leap and disappears behind the tempter. The shepherd calls it. But it does not come back. It runs faster than the wind to join the tempter who has just gone by, and to sustain itself while running it tastes some of the salt, which as soon as it is swallowed, causes a strange burning frenzy so that the poor sheep craves for cool water in the deep green shades of forests. And following the tempter it goes into the forests, and it climbs and descends and falls... once, twice, three times. And each time it feels round its neck the slimy embrace of reptiles, and being thirsty it drinks foul water and when it is hungry it eats herbs shining with revolting slobber.

³And in the meantime what does the good shepherd do? He leaves the ninety-nine faithful ones in a safe place and he sets out and does not stop until he finds traces of the lost sheep. Since it does not come back to him, although he calls it in a loud voice begging the wind to carry his call to it, he goes to the sheep. And he sees it from afar, intoxicated in the coils of reptiles, so intoxicated that it does not feel nostalgia for the man who loves it, on the contrary it mocks him. And he is aware that it is guilty of entering, like a thief, the abode of other people, so guilty that it dare not look at him... And yet the good shepherd does not become tired... and he goes on looking for it all the time, following its traces and weeping when he loses them: strips of fleece; traces of its soul; traces of blood; various crimes; filth; proofs of its lust; but he goes on and reaches it. Ah! I found you, my beloved one. I reached you at last! How far have I walked for you, to take you back to the fold. Do not bend your dejected head. Your sin is buried in my heart. Nobody will know about it, except me, and I love you. I will defend you from

the criticism of other people, I will shield you with my body to protect you against the stones of accusers. Come. Are you wounded? Oh! let me see your wounds. I know them. But I want you to show them to me with the confidence you had when you were pure, and you looked at me, your shepherd and your God, with innocent eyes. There they are. They have all the same name. How deep they are! Who inflicted these very deep ones in the depth of your heart? It was the Tempter, I know. It is he who has neither staff nor hatchet, but he strikes more deeply with his poisonous bite, and after him, the false jewels of his thurible strike: the ones that seduced you by sparkling... and they were hellish sulphur brought to daylight to burn your heart. Look how many wounds! How much torn fleece, how much blood, how much bramble.

⁴O my poor little disappointed soul! But tell me: if I forgive you, will you still love me? Tell me: if I stretch out my arms to you, will you come to them? Tell me: do you thirst for good love? Well: come and be born again. Come back to the holy pastures. Weep. Your tears and mine will wash the traces of your sin and in order to nourish you, because you are worn out by the evil which has burnt you, I open my chest and my veins and I say to you: "Feed on them, and live!" Come here that I may take you in my arms. We will walk faster to the safe holy pastures. You will forget everything of this miserable hour. And your ninety-nine good sisters will rejoice at your return, because I tell you, my little lost sheep, which I have looked for coming from far away, and I reached and saved, I tell you, there is more rejoicing among the good, for one who was lost and has been found, than for ninety-nine just who never left the fold."

⁵Jesus has never turned round to look at the road behind Him and on which Mary of Magdala has arrived in the dim light of the evening. She is most elegant, but at least she is dressed, and she is wearing a dark veil, which conceals her features and figure. But when Jesus continues His speech from the words: "I found you, my beloved one:", Mary hides her hands under the veil and weeps, softly and continuously.

People cannot see her, because she is on this side of the embankment, which runs along the road. Only the moon, now high in the sky, and Jesus' spirit can see her...

And He says to me: "The comment is in the vision itself. But I shall speak to you again about it. Rest now, because it is time, I bless you, My faithful Mary."



233. Comment on Three Episodes Connected with the Conversion of Mary of Magdala.

13th August 1944.

¹Jesus says:

"As from January, when I let you see the supper in the house of Simon, the leper, you and he who guides you, have wished to know more about Mary of Magdala and the words I spoke to her. Now, after seven months, I reveal those pages of the past to you, to make you happy and to give a rule to those who *must* learn to bend over those women, who are lepers in their souls, and also to invite those poor wretches, who are suffocating in their sepulchres of vice, to come out of them.

²God is good. He is good to everybody. He does not measure by means of human measures. He does not discriminate between mortal sins. Sin, whatever it may be, grieves Him. Repentance pleases Him and makes Him willing to forgive. Resistance to Grace makes Him inflexibly severe because Justice cannot forgive the unrepentant *who will die as such, notwithstanding all the help given to them so that they might be converted*. But the main cause of forty per cent, if not fifty per cent, of non-conversions is the negligence of those responsible for conversions, that is, a mistaken false zeal protecting *real* selfishness and pride, whereby one is happy in one's refuge, without having to descend into dirt to save a heart from it. "I am pure, I deserve respect. I will not go where there is filth and where they may fail to respect me".

But has he who speaks thus not read the Gospel where it is written that the Son of God came to call tax collectors and prostitutes beside the honest people, the only honest ones according to the old Law? Does he not think that pride is impurity of the mind, and lack of charity is impurity of the heart? Will you be despised? I was despised before you and more than you, and I was the Son of God. Will you have to wear your clean robe where there is filth? And did I not touch that filth with My hands to make it stand up and say to it: "Walk on this new way"? Do you not remember what I said to your first predecessors? "Whatever town or village you go into, ask for someone trustworthy and *stay* with him". So that the world may not grumble. *Because the world is inclined to see evil in everything*. But I added: "When you enter houses - 'houses' I said, not 'house' - salute them saying: 'Peace to this house'. And if the house deserves it, peace will descend upon it, if it does not, your peace will come back to you". I said that to teach you that until there is a definite proof of unrepentance, you must have the same heart *for everybody*. And I completed My lesson by saying: "And if anyone does not welcome you and does not listen to your words, as you walk out of those houses or towns shake the dust from your feet". Sin is but *dust*, and God makes good souls, who have constantly loved Him, like smooth crystal cubes: it is enough to blow or shake the dust and it disappears without doing any harm.

³Be *really* good. Be thoroughly united, with eternal Bounty in the midst of you, and no corruption will be able to foul you above the soles of your sandals which touch the ground. Souls are so high up! I mean the souls of those who are good and thoroughly united to God. Such souls are in Heaven. And no dust or filth can reach up there, not even when thrown angrily at the spirit of an apostle. They may strike your flesh, that is, they may wound you physically or morally, persecuting you or offending you, because Evil hates Good. And so what? Was I not offended and wounded? Did they perhaps carve those blows and foul words into My Spirit? Did they upset Me? No, they did not. Like spittle on a mirror or a stone thrown against the juicy pulp of a fruit, they skidded without penetrating, or they penetrated only superficially, without damaging the kernel enclosed in the stone: on the contrary it fosters its germination because it is easier to sprout from a cracked core than from a whole one. Through death corn germinates and an apostle becomes active. Sometimes through physical death, or dying daily metaphorically, by crushing one's human *ego*. But that is not death: it is Life. The spirit triumphs over the death of humanity.

⁴She ¹ came to Me to satisfy the passing fancy of an idle woman who did not know how to while away the time, and although her ears were almost deafened by the false homage of those who lulled her singing to her sensuality in order to make her their slave, she heard the clear severe voice of Truth. *Of the Truth that is not afraid of being despised or not understood and speaks looking at God*. And like festive bells ringing together, all the voices mingled in the Word: voices want to sing in the open blue sky, spreading over valleys and hills, plains and lakes, to commemorate the glory of the Lord and His festivity.

Do you not remember the solemn festivity that in peace time made the day of the Lord so joyful? The big bell, with its resonant clapper, gave the first peal in the name of divine Law and seemed to be saying: "I am speaking in the name of God, Judge and King". The smaller bells then harmonised: "Who is good, merciful and patient", and the smallest bell, in a silvery angelical voice added "Whose Love urges men to forgive and be indulgent, to teach men that forgiveness is more useful than wrath and compassion is greater than inflexibility".

Likewise, after recalling the Law, trampled on by the sinner, I made her hear the song of forgiveness. I shook the hope of forgiveness in the darkness of sin, like a green-blue silk scarf among dark shades, so that hope might put in its comforting words. Forgiveness! It is like dew on the parching thirst of sinners. Dew is not like hail, which strikes like a dart, bounces and without penetrating the soil kills flowers. Dew descends so lightly that even the most delicate flower does not perceive it resting on its silk petals. But it drinks its refreshing moisture. Dew settles near roots, on parched clods of earth and penetrates the soil... It is a moisture of tears, the tears of stars, the loving tears of mothers on their thirsty children, whom it nourishes together with their sweet bountiful milk. Oh! the mysteries of elements operating also when man rests or sins! Forgiveness is like such dew. It brings not only cleanliness, but also vital juices, taken not from elements, but from divine hearths.

And after the promise of forgiveness Wisdom speaks saying what is legal and what is not legal, and it reproaches and shakes, not out of harshness, but out of maternal anxiety to save. How often your hardness becomes more impenetrable and unyielding to Charity bending over you!... How often you run away while Charity speaks to you! How often you scorn It! How often you hate It!... If Charity dealt with you as you deal with It, woe to your souls! Instead, see, It is the Untiring Walker who comes looking for you. And It reaches you even if you hide in the darkest of dens.

⁵Why did I decide to go to that house? Why did I not work a miracle in it? To teach the apostles how to behave, *defying prejudices and criticism in order to fulfil their duty, which is so high as to be free from the trifling things of the world.*

Why did I say those words to Judas? The apostles were still *very much* men. All Christians are *very much men*, also the saints on the earth, although to a lesser degree. Some humanism survives also in perfect souls. But the apostles were not yet perfect. Their minds were pervaded with human reasoning. I lifted them up. But the weight of their humanity pulled them down again. To let them descend as little as possible I had to put something on their ascending way, which could stop their descent, something on which they could stop to meditate and rest and thus be able to ascend again to a higher level than previously. I had to bring forth something capable of convincing them that I was God, that is: introspection of their souls, victory over elements, miracles, transfiguration, resurrection, ubiquity. I was on the road to Emmaus when I was in the Last Supper room, and the time of My ubiquity, when discussed by the apostles and disciples, was one of the reasons which affected them most strongly, freeing them from their ties and urging them on to the way of Christ. Rather than to Judas, who was already brooding over death, I was speaking to the other eleven. I was compelled to make it very clear to them that I was God, not out of pride, but of necessity for their formation. I was God and Master. Those words define Me as such. I reveal Myself by means of an extra-human faculty and I teach a virtue: we must not talk evil things *not even in our hearts*. Because God sees, and God must see a pure heart to descend into it and dwell there.

Why *did I not work* the miracle in that house? To make everybody understand that the presence of God *calls for a pure environment*, out of respect for His sublime majesty. I did not work the miracle there, because I wanted to speak to her, not uttering words with My lips, but with a deeper word addressed to her sinful soul and say: "See, poor wretch? You are so filthy that everything near you becomes foul. So foul, that God cannot act. *You are filthier than he is*. Because you are repeating Eve's sin and are offering your fruit to many Adams, by tempting them and taking them away from their Duty. You are a minister of Satan". But why do I not want her to be called "Satan" by his dejected mother? *Because no reason can justify insult and hatred. The first essential condition to have God with us is to bear no ill-will and to forgive.* The second condition is *to admit that we, or those who belong to us, are sinners as well. We must not see only other people's faults.* The third condition is *to remain grateful and faithful, after receiving grace, out of justice to the Eternal Father.* Woe to those who after receiving grace are worse than dogs and do not remember their Benefactor, whereas animals do!

I did not say one word to Mary Magdalene. I looked at her for a moment, as if she were a statue, then I left her. I went back to the "living ones" whom I wanted to save. I treated her with *seeming* carelessness, as if she were dead, like or more than a lifeless sculptured piece of marble. But I did not utter a word or make a gesture that did not aim mainly at her poor soul, which I wanted to redeem. And the last words: "I do not insult. Do not insult. Pray for sinners. Nothing else", like a garland of flowers the ends of which are joined together, are to be joined to the first words spoken upon the mountain: "Forgiveness is more useful than wrath and compassion than inflexibility". And these have enclosed the poor wretch in a cool velvet circle, scented with goodness, making her feel how the loving service of God is different from the cruel slavery of Satan, how sweet is the heavenly perfume as compared to the stench of sin, and how relaxing it is to be loved *holily* as compared to being possessed *saturnally*.

See how moderate is the will of the Lord. He does not exact immediate conversions. He does not claim the absolute from a heart. He can wait and be satisfied. And while he waits for the lost woman to find her way, for the mad woman to find reason, He is satisfied with what the dejected mother can give her. I ask her only: "Can you forgive?" How many more questions I should have asked her to make her worthy of the miracle, if I had behaved according to human standards! But I measure your strength in a *divine way*. It was already a great success if the poor deranged mother could really forgive. And that is all I ask her, at that moment. After giving her son back to her, I say to her: "Be holy and make your house holy". But while the pangs of grief derange her mind, I ask her but to forgive the culprit. You must not exact *everything* from those who shortly before

were in Darkness. That mother was to come later to full light, with her daughter-in-law and the children. For the time being, it was necessary to let first dawning of Light reach her eyes blinded by tears: that is, forgiveness, the dawn of God's day.

Of the people present only one - I am not referring to Judas, I am speaking of the people gathered there, not of My disciples - only one was not to come to the Light. There is always someone for whom the apostle toils in vain. But you must not lose heart because of such defeats. An apostle must not pretend to achieve *everything*. Struggling against him there are adverse powers, with many different names, and like tentacles of an octopus they grasp again the prey that he had snatched from them. But the apostle is still meritorious. Woe to the apostle who says: "I am not going there because I know that I shall not be able to convert anyone". He is an apostle of very little value. It is necessary to go even if only one in a thousand will be saved. His apostolic day will be as fruitful because of that one as it would be for a thousand, because he will have done everything in his power and that is what God rewards. You must also consider that where the apostle is not able to convert, because the person to be converted is too firmly gripped by Satan and the power of the apostle is inadequate to the effort, God may intervene. And then? Who is greater than God?

Another thing that the apostle must absolutely practise is love. *Clear* love. Not only the secret love for the hearts of brethren. That is enough for good brethren. But the apostle is a worker of God and he must not limit himself to prayer: he must act. Let him act with love, with great love. Rigour paralyses the apostle's work and hinders the motion of souls towards the Light. So: not rigour, but love. Love is the incombustible fabric that protects you against the blaze of wicked passions. Love is the saturation of preserving essences which prevent human-satanic purification from entering You. To conquer a soul you must learn how to love. To conquer a soul you must induce it to love: to love God and disown its petty sinful love.

I wanted Mary's soul. And as in your case, My little John, I did not confine Myself to speaking from the Teacher's desk. I stooped looking for her in the paths of sin. I pursued her and persecuted her by means of My love. A kind persecution! I-Purity followed her where she was Impurity. I was not afraid of any scandal, neither with regard to Myself nor to others. I could not be scandalised, because I was Mercy; nor to others. I could not be scandalised, because I was Mercy; and Mercy weeps over sins but is not scandalised by them. Woe to the shepherd who is scandalised and entrenches himself behind the screen of scandal to abandon a soul! Do you not know that souls are more inclined than bodies to rise again and that the pitiful loving word saying: "Rise, sister, for your own good" often works a miracle? I was not afraid of other people's scandal. My behaviour was justified in the eyes of God, and was understood by good people. An evil-minded man fermenting with wickedness, which evaporates from a corrupt heart, *is of no importance*. Such man finds faults also in God, and considers only himself perfect. I therefore paid no attention to such people.

6The three phases of the salvation of a soul are:

To be thoroughly and strictly honest in order to be able to speak without any fear of being silenced. To be able to speak to a whole crowd so that our apostolic word, addressed to the crowds gathering round our mystical boat, may travel farther and farther, like circles of waves, until it reaches the miry shore, where those who are not interested in knowing the Truth are lying in the mud. That is the first task in order to break the hard crust of the soil and prepare it to receive the seed. It is the hardest task both for him who performs it and for him who receives it, because words, like a sharp ploughshare, must wound the listener in order to open his heart. And I solemnly tell you that the heart of a good apostle is hurt and bleeds because of the grief in having to wound in order to open. But that grief also is prolific. Through the blood and the tears of an apostle waste land becomes fertile.

The second quality: *It is necessary to act also where one, less conscious of one's mission, would flee*. The apostle must break his back in the effort to extirpate dandelion, couch-grass and thorns in order to clear the soil and plough it and then let the power of God and His bounty shine on it like the sun. And at the same time, like a judge and a doctor, he must be severe and merciful, and remain firm in the period of waiting to give the souls time to surmount their crises, to meditate and make up their minds.

Third phase: *As soon as a soul that has repented in silence, dares to come shyly towards an apostle, weeping and thinking of its faults, fearing to be driven away, the apostle's heart, must be greater than the sea, more gentle than a mother's heart, more loving than a bride's, and he must open it completely* to allow waves of tenderness to flow from it. If you have God, Who is Charity, within you, you will easily find charitable words to be spoken to souls. God will speak in you and on your behalf and like honey dropping from a honeycomb, like balm flowing from a phial, love will reach parched sickened lips; it will reach wounded souls and will be relief and medicine.

You doctors of souls, make sinners love you. Let them taste the flavour of Heavenly Charity and let them become so eager for it, as to seek no other food. Let them feel in your kindness such a relief, as to seek it for all their wounds. Your charity must free them from all fear, because, as the epistle which you have read today says: "To fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love". Neither is he perfect who causes people to be afraid. Do not say: "What have you done?" Do not say: "Go away". Do not say: "You cannot have relish for good love".

Say instead, in My name: "Love and I will forgive you". Say: "Come, Jesus' arms are open". Say: "Enjoy this angelical Bread and this Word and forget the pitch of hell and Satan's sneers". Bear the weakness of other people. An apostle must bear his own and other people's weaknesses, with his own crosses and other people's. And while coming to Me, laden with wounded sheep, encourage the poor stray souls saying: "Everything is forgotten by now"; say: "Be not afraid of the Saviour. He came from Heaven for you, just for you. I am but a bridge to carry you to Him Who is waiting for you, on the other side of the river of penitential absolution, to lead you to His holy pastures, which begin here, on the earth, and continue in Heaven, in everlasting nutritious delightful Beauty".

⁷Here is the comment. It is of little concern to you, sheep faithful to the Good Shepherd. But if in you, little bride, it increases confidence, in the Father ⁽¹⁾ it will be greater light in His light as judge, and for many it will be no incentive to come to God. But it will be penetrating and nourishing dew of which I have spoken and which makes withered flowers stand upright again.

Raise your heads. Heaven is high above. Go in peace, Mary. The Lord is with you."

(1) That is, the Spiritual Father of Maria Valtorta.

234 Martha Has Her Victory within Her Grasp.

29th July 1945.

¹Jesus is about to embark in the boat, at the dawn of a clear summer day which is spreading roses on the wrinkled silky surface of the lake, when Martha arrives with her maidservant. "Oh! Master! Listen to me, for God's sake" she says.

Jesus goes back on to the shore and says to the apostles: "Go and wait for Me at the torrent. In the meantime prepare everything for our trip towards Magedan. The Decapolis also is waiting for the word. Go."

And while the boat moves away and takes to the open lake, Jesus walks beside Martha. Marcella respectfully follows them.

They thus move away from the village walking on the shore, which from a sandy stretch, strewn at lake level with sparse tufts of wild herbs, becomes completely covered with vegetation as it climbs up the hill sides, which are reflected in the lake.

When they reach a lonely spot, Jesus asks smiling: "What do you want to tell Me?"

²"Oh! Master... Mary came home last night shortly after midnight. Oh! I was forgetting to tell You that while we were having lunch at midday, she said to me: "Would you mind lending me one of your dresses and a mantle? They may be a little short. But I will leave the dress loose and hold the mantle down..." I replied to her: "You may take whatever you wish, my dear sister". My heart was throbbing because, shortly before, speaking to Marcella in the garden I had said to her: "At vesper we must be at Capernaum, because the Master is speaking to the crowds this evening" and I saw Mary start and change colour. She became restless, moving about all alone, like a person in pain or in a flutter, on the point of making a decision... but does not know which way to decide. After lunch she went into my room and took the most dark and modest dress I had, she tried it on and asked the nurse to let the hem down, as it was too short. She tried to do it herself, but weeping she confessed: "I am no longer good at sewing. I have forgotten everything useful and good..." and she threw her arms round my neck saying: "Pray for me". She went out about sunset... How much I prayed, that she might not meet anyone who would keep her from coming here, so that she might understand Your word and succeed in definitely strangling the monster enslaving her... Look: I put Your belt, which I tied under my own, and when I felt my waist being oppressed by the hard stiff leather, to which it is not used, I would say: "He is stronger than anything". Then Marcella and I came by wagon, as it is quicker. I do not know whether You saw us in the crowd... But what an aching pain in my heart at not seeing Mary! I would say to myself: "She must have changed her mind. She has gone back home. Or...she has run away as she could no longer stand my control, although she had asked for it". I was listening to You and weeping under my veil. Your words seemed to be spoken just for her... and she did not hear them! That is what I was thinking as I did not see her. I went back home down-hearted. It is the truth. I disobeyed You because you had said to me: "If she comes, you stay at home and wait for her". But think of my heart, Master! It was my sister coming to You! How could I not be there to see her near You? And then... You said to me: "She will be broken" and I wanted to be near her to support her at once...

³I was kneeling in my room weeping and praying and it was after midnight when she came in. She came in so softly that I heard her only when she threw herself upon me embracing me and saying: "Everything you say, my blessed sister, is true. Nay, it is much more so than you told me. His mercy is much greater. Oh! Martha! There is no further need for you to watch

me! You will see that I am no longer cynical and miserable! You will no longer hear me say 'I do not want to think!' Now I want to think. I know what to think of. Of Bounty Which became flesh. You were certainly praying for me sister. And victory is already within your grasp: Your Mary, who no longer wants to sin and who is born to a new life.

Here she is. Look at her straight in the face. Because she is a new Mary, whose face has been washed by tears of hope and repentance. You can kiss me, my pure sister. There is no trace of shameful love affairs on my face. He said that He loves my soul. Because He was speaking to my soul and about my soul and about my soul. I was the lost sheep. He said, listen if I am right. You know how the Saviour speaks..." and she repeated Your parable perfectly. Mary is so intelligent! Much more intelligent than I am. And she remembers. So I heard You twice; and if those words were holy and adorable on Your lips, on hers they were holy, adorable and loving because they were spoken to my sister, who had been found and had come back to the family fold. We were witting on a mat on the floor, embracing each other, as we were wont to do when we were little girls in my mother's room or near the loom where she wove or embroidered her wonderful cloths. And we remained thus, no longer divided by sin, and my mother also seemed to be present in her spirit. We wept without any grief, on the contrary, with so much peace! We kissed each other happily... And then Mary, who was tired after her long walk, and was exhausted with emotion and so many feelings, fell asleep in my arms and with the help of the nurse I laid her on my bed... and I left her there to come here..." and Martha, thoroughly happy, kisses Jesus' hands.

⁴"I also will tell you what Mary said to you: "Victory is already in your grasp". Go and be happy. Go in peace. Let your behaviour be kind and prudent with your reborn sister. Goodbye, Martha. Let Lazarus know, as he is worried."

"Yes, Master. But when will Mary come with us women disciples?"

Jesus smiles and says: "The Creator created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh."

"I understand. I must be patient..."

"Yes, patient. Do not sigh. That is a virtue as well. Peace to you, women. We shall meet soon" and Jesus leaves them and goes towards the place where the boat is waiting near the shore.

⁵Jesus says: "Put here the vision of the supper in the house of Simon, the Pharisee, which you saw on January 21st, 1944."

235. Mary Magdalene in the House of Simon, the Pharisee.

21st January 1994.

¹To comfort me in my complex suffering and make me forget the wickedness of men, my Jesus grants me this sweet contemplation.

I see a sumptuous hall. A many-branched candlestick is hanging in the centre and is completely lit. The hall is hung with beautiful tapestry; there are magnificent pieces of furniture and chairs inlaid and decorated with ivory and precious metal leaves.

There is a large square table in the centre, consisting of four tables assembled together. The table has been laid for many guests (all men) and is covered with beautiful table-cloths and very expensive tableware. There are valuable amphorae and cups and many servants are moving round the table carrying dishes and pouring out wines. There is no one in the centre of the square. I can see the magnificent floor which reflects the lights of the oil chandelier. Around the table there are many couches, all occupied by the guests.

I appear to be in the half-dark corner at the end of the hall, near a door, which is wide open, although screened by a heavy piece of tapestry hanging from its architrave.

The landlord and the most important guests are on the opposite side, that is, the farthest side from the door. The landlord is elderly, wearing a wide white tunic tied round his waist by an embroidered belt. Round the collar, the cuffs and the hem of the tunic there are strips of embroidered work, which have been attached as if they were embroidered ribbons or strips. But I do not like his expression. It is malicious, cold, proud and greedy.

On the opposite side, facing him, there is my Jesus. I see Him sideways, almost from behind His back. He is wearing His usual white tunic, sandals, and His long hair is parted on His forehead.

I see that both He and all the guests are not sitting up to the table, as I thought one would on those couches, instead they are reclined parallelly. In the vision of the wedding at Cana I did not pay much attention to this detail. I saw that they were eating leaning on their left elbows, but they did not appear to be so reclined, probably because the couches were shorter and not so sumptuous. Those I see now are real beds, and look like modern Turkish divans.

John is near Jesus and since Jesus is leaning on His left elbow, like everybody else, John is between the table and Jesus' body, with his elbow at the height of the Master's groin, so that he does not hinder Him while eating, but if he wishes, he can lie confidentially on His chest.

There is no woman at the table. They are all talking and the landlord now and again addresses Jesus with evident affected condescension. It is obvious that he wants to show to Him and to all those present as well, that he has greatly honoured Him, a poor and rather hot-headed prophet, as many people consider Him, by inviting Him to his wealthy house... I see Jesus reply kindly and quietly. He smiles faintly at those who ask Him questions, but His smile becomes bright when John speaks to Him or even looks at Him.

²I see the magnificent curtain covering the door-space being raised and a young woman come in. She is beautiful, sumptuously dressed and her hair is splendidly arranged. The artistically interlaced locks of her very thick blond hair form a beautiful ornament on her head. Her hair is so bright and abundant that she seems to be wearing a golden helmet wrought in relief. If I should have to compare the dress she has on with the ones I have always seen the Blessed Virgin Mary wear, I would say that it is very peculiar and complicated. There are buckles on the shoulders, jewels to hold together the pleats at the top of the breast, little gold chains to outline the breast, and the belt is adorned with studs and gems. It is a provoking dress, which emphasises the features of her beautiful body. The veil on her head is so light that... it veils nothing: it is an additional charm and nothing else. Her sandals are very expensive ones, of red leather with gold buckles and strips interlaced round her ankles.

Everybody, except Jesus, turns round to look at her. John watches her for a moment, then looks at Jesus. The others stare at her with evident malicious avidity. But the woman does not look at them, neither does she pay attention to the whispering that has arisen at her entrance, or to the winking of the people present, with the exception of Jesus and His disciple. Jesus pretends He has seen nothing. He continues His conversation with the landlord.

The woman goes towards Jesus and kneels down at the feet of the Master. She lays on the floor a little vase, shaped like a pot-bellied amphora, takes off her veil after removing a long valuable pin, which fastened it to her hair, she removes rings from her fingers and lays everything on the couch near Jesus' feet. She then takes His feet in her hands, first the right one and then the left one, unlaces His sandals and lays them on the floor. She then kisses His feet bursting into tears, she rests her forehead on them, caresses them, while tears stream down her face like drops of rain, shining in the light of the chandelier and wetting those adorable feet.

³Jesus turns His head round very slightly and slowly, and His deep eyes rest for a moment on the woman's reclined head. An absolving glance. He then looks again at the centre of the hall, leaving her free in her outburst.

But the others do not: they scoff, wink and sneer. The Pharisee sits up for a moment to have a better view and his eyes express desire, vexation and irony. He desires the woman, and that feeling is evident. He is vexed because she has come in so freely, which may cause the others to think that she is a habitual guest in the house. And he is ironical with regard to Jesus...

But the woman is not aware of anything. She continues to shed torrents of tears noiselessly. She weeps and now and again she sobs. She then lets her hair down, after removing the gold hairpins, which held up her complicated hairdress and she puts also the hairpins near the rings and the long veil-pin. Her golden locks roll down her back. She takes them with both hands, brings them in front of her and rubs them on Jesus' wet feet, until she sees that they are dry. She dips her fingers into the little vase and takes out a yellowish highly scented ointment. A sweet-smelling perfume, a mixture of lily and tuberose, spreads throughout the hall. The woman uses it profusely, she spreads it, kissing and caressing His feet at the same time.

⁴Jesus looks at her now and again with so much loving pity. John, who looked round in amazement when she burst into tears, cannot detach his eyes from Jesus and the woman and looks at them alternately.

The face of the Pharisee has become more and more sullen. I now hear the well known words of the Gospel and I hear them uttered *in a tone and with a look*, which cause the old resentful man to lower his head.

I hear the words absolving the woman, who goes away leaving her jewels at Jesus' feet. She has tied her veil round her head, thus gathering together her disheveled hair as best she can. Jesus, while saying to her: "Go in peace", lays His hand on her reclined head for a moment. A very gentle gesture.

⁵Jesus now says to me:

"What made the Pharisee and his companions lower their heads and is not mentioned in the Gospel, are the words that My spirit, in one glance darted at him and drove into his arid avid soul. I answered him much more than has been reported, because none of the thoughts of those men was concealed from Me. And he understood My mute language, which was more meaningful and reproachful than My words were.

I said to him: "No. Do not make wicked insinuations to justify yourself to yourself. I am not affected by lewdness as you are. She does not come to Me attracted by sensuality. I am not you or like those who are like you. She comes to Me because My countenance and My word, which she heard by chance, have enlightened her soul, which lust had left in utter darkness. And she comes because she wants to overcome her sensuality and she realises, poor creature, that she will never succeed by herself. She loves My spirit, nothing but My spirit, which she perceives is supernaturally good. After so much evil that she received from you all, who have taken advantage of her weakness for your own vices, rewarding her with your lashing scorn, she comes to Me, because she realises that she has found Goodness, Joy and Peace, which she sought in vain in the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. Cure the leprosy of your soul, o hypocritical Pharisee, that you may have the right view of things. Forsake pride of mind and lust of flesh. *Their leprosy is much more fetid than the leprosy of your bodies.* My touch can cure you of the latter, because you beg Me to cure you, *but I cannot cure you of the leprosy of your souls, because you do not wish to be cured, as you like it.* But she wants to recover. And thus I cleanse her, and I free her from the chains of her slavery. The sinner is dead. She is still over there, in those ornaments that she is ashamed to offer Me that I may sanctify them, using them for the needs of My disciples and Mine and for the poor, whom I help by means of the surplus of other people, *because I, the Master of the universe, possess nothing now that I am the Saviour of man.* She is still here, in the perfume spread on My feet, the perfume that has been humiliated like her hair, on that part of My body that you disdained, to refresh with the water of your sell, notwithstanding I have walked so far to bring light to you also. The sinner is dead. And Mary is reborn, as beautiful as a modest girl, through her deep sorrow and her righteous love. She washed herself in her tears. And I solemnly tell you, o Pharisee, that between this young man who loves Me in the purity of his youth, and that woman who loves Me in the sincerity of repentance of a heart reborn to Grace, I make no difference. And to the Pure young man and the Repentant woman I entrust the task of understanding My thought as no one else can, as well as the task of rendering the last honours to My Body, and the first greetings (I am not taking into account My Mother's special greetings) when I will rise from the dead". That is what I wanted to tell the Pharisee by means of My countenance.

⁶But I will draw your attention to something else: *for your joy and the joy of many.* Also at Bethany Mary repeated the gesture that marked the dawn of her redemption. There are personal gestures, which are repeated and are peculiar to a person like the person's style. They are unmistakable gestures. But, as it was fair, at Bethany's the gesture was not humiliated so much and it was more confidential in its reverent adoration.

Mary has gone a long way since that dawn of her redemption. A very long way. Love, like a high wind, has blown her high up and far ahead. Love has burnt her like a fire, destroying her impure flesh and making a purified spirit her new master. And Mary, now different in her revived womanly dignity, as she is different in her clothing, which is now as simple as My Mother's, in her hair-style, her looks, her behaviour, her words, this *new* Mary has a new way to honour Me by means of the same gesture. She takes the last of her vases of perfume, which she kept for Me, and pours it on My feet and My head, *without shedding any tears, with a happy countenance due to love and the certainty that she had been forgiven and saved.* Mary can now touch My head and anoint Me. *Repentance and love have cleansed her by means of the fire of seraphim and she is a seraph.*

Repeat that to yourself, Mary, My little "voice" and repeat it to souls. Go, tell the souls that dare not come to Me because they feel guilty. He who loves much is pardoned much. That is, He who loves Me, You, poor souls, do not know how much the Saviour loves you! Be not afraid of Me. Come. Confidently. Courageously. I open My heart and My arms to you.

Always remember: "I make no difference between him who loves Me with his spotless purity and him who loves Me in the sincere contrition of a heart reborn to Grace". I am the Saviour. Always remember that.

Go in peace. I bless you."

22nd January 1944.

⁷I have been thinking all day of Jesus' dictation of yesterday evening and of what I saw and understood, even if it was not said.

In the meantime, by the way, I tell you that the conversation of the commensals, as far as I could understand, that is, the part addressed to Jesus, was about daily events: the Romans, the Law opposed by them, and then the mission of Jesus as Master of a new school. But under the seeming benevolence it was clear that they asked vicious and captious questions to embarrass Him. A difficult task, because Jesus in a few words gave the right and conclusive answer to each subject.

For instance, when they asked Him of which particular school or sect He had become the new master, He replied simply: "Of God's school. It is He Whom I follow in His holy Law and to Whose interests I devote Myself, ensuring that it may be renewed for these little ones (and He lovingly looked at John and in John at all honest-hearted people) in all its essence, as it was on the day that the Lord God promulgated it on Sinai. I take men back to the Light of God."

To the other question, as to what He thought of the abuse of power by Caesar, who had become the ruler of Palestine, He replied: "*Caesar is what he is because that is what God wants. Remember the prophet Isaiah. Through divine inspiration, does he not call Asshur "the rod" of His anger? The rod that punishes the people of God, because it has become too detached from God and its outer appearance and spirit are hypocrisy? And does He not say that after using him as a punishment, He will destroy him because he will have abused his task, by becoming too proud and cruel?*"

Those are the two replies that impressed me most."

⁸Then this evening my Jesus says to me smiling:

"I should call you as I called Daniel. You are the woman of wishes and you are dear to Me because you want your God so much. And I could continue saying to you what was said to Daniel by My angel: "Be not afraid, because from the first day when you applied to your heart to understand and grieve in the presence of God, your prayers have been heard and they are the reason why I have come". But here it is not the angel who is speaking. I am speaking to you: Jesus.

Mary, I always come when "a heart is anxious to understand". I am not a hard severe God. I am Living Mercy. And I come faster than thought to those who apply to Me. And I went immediately to poor Mary of Magdala, so immersed in sin, with My spirit, *as soon as I perceived that the desire to understand was rising in her. The desire to understand the light of God and her own state of darkness. And I became her Light.*

⁹I was speaking to many that day, but in actual fact I was speaking only for her. I saw but her who had approached us driven by the vehemence of her soul, which rebelled against the flesh enslaving it. I saw but her with her poor face in turmoil, her forced smile, which endeavoured to hide so much weeping of her heart, under the appearance of false confidence and joy, which were a challenge to the world and herself. I saw but her, more entangled in the bramble than the lost sheep of the parable and she was drowning in the disgust of her own life, a disgust brought to the surface like those deep waves that bring up the water of the bottom.

I did not say great words, neither did I touch any specific subject concerning her, a well known sinner, as I did not wish to mortify her, compelling her to run away, to be ashamed or to come to Me. I left her in peace... I let My word and My look descend into her, fermenting there to turn the impulse of a moment into her glorious holy future. I spoke by means of one of the most gentle parables: a beam of light and kindness flashing just for her. And that evening, while I was setting foot in the house of the proud rich Pharisee, where My word could not fermentate into future glory because it was killed by Pharisaiic pride, I already knew that she would come after weeping bitterly in her room of vice and that she had already decided on her future in the light of her tears.

¹⁰Both the flesh and the thoughts of the men were inflamed with lust when they saw her enter. Everybody looked at her lustfully, except the two "pure ones" present at the banquet: John and I. They all thought that she came because of one of her usual caprices, a true diabolic possession, which drove her to extemporaneous affairs. *But Satan was already defeated.* And when they all noticed that she did not look at them, they enviously thought that she had come for Me. *Man always fouls also the purest things, when he is but flesh and blood. Only the pure have the right view because there is no sin in them upsetting their thoughts.*

But there is no reason to be frightened because man does not understand, Mary. God understands. And that is enough for Heaven. The glory that comes from men does not add an ounce to the glory that is the destiny of the blessed souls in Paradise. Always remember that. Poor Mary of Magdala was always wrongly judged in her good deeds. But she was not wrongly judged in her bad deeds because they were lustful mouthfuls offered to the insatiable hunger of lewd men. She was criticised and wrongly judged at Nain, in the house of the Pharisee and she was criticised and reproached at Bethany, in her own home.

But John, who says a great word, has the key to the last bit of criticism: "Judas... *because he was a thief*". I say: "The Pharisee and his friends *because they were lewd*". See? Lust for sensuality, greed for money raise their voices to criticise good deeds. Good people do not criticise. *Never*. They understand.

But, I would repeat it, the criticism of the world is of no importance. What matters is the judgement of God."

236. The Harvest Is Rich but the Labourers Are Few. The Parable of the Treasure Hidden in the Field.

29th July 1945.

¹Jesus is on the road that comes from Lake Merom towards the Lake of Galilee. He is with the Zealot and Bartholomew near a modest little brook, which nevertheless nourishes many plants, and the trio seem to be waiting for the others who are about to arrive from two different directions.

It is a very warm day, and yet many people have followed the three groups that have been preaching in the country addressing those who are in good health and taking the sick to the Master. Many people who have been cured miraculously form a happy group sitting among the trees, and their joy is such that they do not even feel tired notwithstanding the heat, the dust, the dazzling light, which are a great trial for everybody else.

When the group led by Judas Thaddeus first arrives near Jesus, all those forming it or following it appear to be very tired. The last group to arrive is the one led by Peter and it comprises many people from Korazim and Bethsaida.

"We have finished, Master. But there ought to be many groups... You can see Yourself. It is not possible to walk far, because of the heat. So what can we do? The more we have to do, the more the world seems to be widening out, scattering villages and increasing distances. I never realised that Galilee was so large. We are in a corner of Galilee, just a corner, and yet we cannot evangelize it, so wide it is and so large the number of those who need You and want You" sighs Peter.

"It is not the world that is growing wider. It is the knowledge of our Master that is spreading" replies Thaddeus.

"Yes, it is true. Look how many people. Many have been following us since this morning. During the warmest hours we took shelter in a copse. But even now, when it is almost evening, it is painful to walk. And these poor people are much farther from their homes than we are. If our work keeps growing like this, I do not know what we shall do..." says James of Zebedee.

"The shepherds will be coming too, in Tishri" says Andrew to encourage them.

"Yes! Shepherds, disciples, how lovely! They are only good at saying: "Jesus is the Saviour. He is over there". Nothing else" replies Peter.

"At least people will know where to find Him. Instead now...! If we come here, they rush here, and while they are coming here, we go there, and they have to run after us. Which is not very pleasant when there are children and sick people."

²Jesus speaks: "You are right, Peter. I feel sorry as well for these souls and this people. The fact that many of them may not find Me at a certain moment, may be the cause of irreparable misfortunes. Look how tired and bewildered are those who are not yet certain of My Truth and look how hungry are those who have already tasted My word and can no longer go without it, and no other word can satisfy them. They look like sheep without a shepherd, wandering about without finding anyone who may lead them and pasture them. I will see to them, but you must help Me, with all your spiritual, moral and physical strength. You will no longer have to go around in large groups, but in couples. And we will send also the best disciples two by two. Because the harvest is really rich. Oh! I will prepare you in summer for this great mission. By the month of Tammuz Isaac will join us with his best disciples. And I will prepare you. But even so you will not be enough. Because the harvest is really rich but the labourers are few. So pray the Lord of the harvest to send many labourers to His harvest."

"Yes, my Lord. But that will not make such difference to the situation of those who seek You" says James of Alphaeus.

"Why, brother?"

"Because they are looking not only for doctrine and words of Life, but they want to be cured and to be assisted and helped in all their ailments and in the impairments that either Satan or life have brought to their inferior or superior parts. And only You can do that, because Yours is the Power."

"Those who are one with Me will be able to do what I do and the poor will be helped in all their miseries. But you do not have as yet what is required to do that. Endeavour to overcome yourselves, o trample on your humanity and thus let your spirit triumph. Absorb not only My word, but the spirit of it, that is, sanctify yourselves through it and then you will be able to do everything. And now let us go and speak to them, as they do not wish to go away unless I speak the word of God to them. Then we shall go back to Capernaum. There will be someone waiting for us there as well..."

³"Lord, is it true that Mary of Magdala asked You to forgive her, in the Pharisee's house?"

"It is true, Thomas."

"And did You forgive her?" asks Philip.

"I did."

"You did the wrong thing!" exclaims Bartholomew.

"Why? She was sincerely repentant and deserved to be forgiven."

"But You should not have forgiven her in *that* house, publicly..." says the Iscariot reproachingly.

"But I do not understand where I was wrong."

"This is the point: You know who the Pharisees are, how full their heads are of cavils, how they watch You, slander and hate You. one of them in Capernaum was Your friend and that was Simon. And You called a prostitute into his house to desecrate it and cause scandal to Your friend Simon."

"I did not call her. She came. She was not a prostitute. She repented. That throws a different light on the matter. *If they were not overcome with nausea beforehand, when they approached her and desired her*, also in My presence, now that she is no longer just flesh, but a soul, they should not feel disgust seeing her enter the house to kneel at My feet and accuse herself weeping, humiliating herself in humble public confession represented by her tears. Simon the Pharisee had his house sanctified by a great miracle: "the resurrection of a soul". Five days ago in the square in Capernaum he asked Me: "Is that the only miracle You worked?" and he replied himself: "Certainly not" showing his desire to see one. And I gave it to him. I chose him to be the witness, the middleman of this engagement of a soul with Grace. He ought to be proud of it."

"Instead he is scandalised. Perhaps You have lost a friend."

"I found a soul. It is worth losing a man with his friendship, the poor friendship of a man, to give a soul the friendship of God."

"It is useless. We cannot get You to consider matters from a human point of view. We are on the earth, Master! Remember that. And the laws and the ideas of the world are in force. You act according to the method of Heaven, You live in the Heaven You have in Your heart, You see everything in the light of Heaven. Poor Master of Mine! How divinely unsuited You are to live among us wicked people!" exclaims Judas embracing Him. The apostle, who is amazed and desolate at the same time, concludes: "And I am sorry because, through too much perfection, You make enemies of too many people."

"Do not be sorry, Judas. It is written that it must be thus. But how do you know that Simon is offended?"

"He did not say that he is offended. But he made Thomas and me understand that it should not have happened. You should not have invited her to his house, which only honest people enter."

"Well! With regard to the honesty of the people going to Simon's house, let us drop the subject" says Peter.

And Matthew adds: "I could say that the perspiration of prostitutes poured several times on the floors, on the table and beyond them in the house of Simon, the Pharisee."

"But not publicly" retorts Judas.

"No. Hypocrisy concealed it."

"So you can see that there is a difference."

"There is also a difference between a prostitute who goes in to say: "I am giving up my disgraceful sinful life" and one who goes in to say: "Here I am to commit sin with you."

"Matthew is right" they all say.

"Of course, he is right. But they do not reason the way we do. We must come to a compromise with them, and adjust ourselves to their ways to have them friendly."

"No, never, Judas. In truth, honesty, in moral behaviour there are neither adjustments nor compromises" thunders Jesus. And He concludes: "In any case I know that I acted rightly and for a good purpose. And that is enough. Let us go and dismiss those tired people."

⁴And He goes towards those who are spread under the trees, looking in His direction, anxiously waiting to hear Him.

"Peace to you all who have walked for miles and in dog days to come and hear the Gospel. I solemnly tell you that you are beginning to really understand what the Kingdom of God is, how precious its possession is and how blissful to belong to it. And labour is no longer burdensome for you, as it is for others, because you are ruled by your soul, which says to the flesh: "Rejoice because I am oppressing you. I am doing it for your own happiness. When you are joined to me again, after resurrection, you will love me for crushing you and you will see me as your second saviour". Do your souls not say that? Of course they do! You now base your actions on the teaching of the parables I spoke to you some time ago. But I will now give you further light to make you love more and more the Kingdom which awaits you and the value of which cannot be measured.

Listen: A man went by chance into a field to get some mould for his little kitchen garden and while he was digging with some difficulty the very hard soil, he came across a vein of precious metal. What did the man do then? He covered up with earth what he had discovered. He did not mind working a little more, because the discovery justified the work. He then went home, he gathered together all his wealth consisting of money and valuables and he sold the latter to make more money. He then went to the owner of the field and said to him: "I like your field. How much do you want for it?" "I am not selling it" replied the owner. But the man offered larger and larger sums of money disproportionate to the value of the field, and at last he succeeded in convincing the owner who thought: "This man must be mad! And supposing he is, I am going to take advantage of the situation. I will accept the money he offers me. It is not a matter of money-grubbing, because he insists in offering me it. With that money I will be able to buy at least three more fields, and better ones as well". And he sold the field the field and was sure he had done very good business.

¹<She> is Mary Magdalene. In order to understand the full meaning of the present Chapter and events referred to therein, please see Chapter 183.

THE SEEDS OF MARY MAGDALENE'S CONVERSION (Vol. 1, p. 736-40)

(Jesus is speaking to a crowd of people in the garden of the house of Simon the Zealot. He compares the world, which belongs to bad people who only appear to be happy, with paradise which belongs to the good. Lazarus and Martha see their sister Mary behind a hedge at the back of the crowd. Jesus holds Martha back and continues ...)

« What shall we say of those unhappy people? God gave them time to do penance, but they misuse it in order to sin. But God does not lose sight of them, even if He seems to. And the moment comes when, either because the love of God pierces their hard hearts, as a thunderbolt penetrates a rock, or because the total mass of crimes carries the wave of their filth right into their throats and nostrils - and they are disgusted, at last they are disgusted with that taste and that stench which are nauseating also to other people and fill their own hearts - the moment comes when they loathe it and a feeling - desiring good - roots in their hearts. Each soul then cries: "Who will allow me to go back to former times, when I was a friend of God? When His light shone in my heart and I walked in its rays? When the amazed world was silent before my justice, and who saw me said I was blessed? The world craved for my smiles, and my words were received like the words of an angel, and the hearts of my relatives leapt with pride in their chests. And what am I now? I am an object of derision to young people, of horror to elderly people, I am the subject of their songs, and they spit scornfully in my face."

Truly, that is how in certain moments the souls of sinners speak, the souls of the true Jobs, because there is no greater misery for man than to lose God's friendship and His Kingdom for ever. And they must arouse pity. Only pity. They are poor souls, who out of idleness or rashness, have lost the eternal Spouse. "On my bed, at night, I sought him whom my heart loves. I sought but did not find him". In fact in the darkness one cannot distinguish the spouse, and the soul, spurred by love, being thoughtless because, enveloped by a spiritual night, seeks and wants to find relief from its torture. And the soul thinks it can be found with any love. No. *Only one is the love of the soul: God.* Those souls, spurred on by the love of God, wander seeking love. It would be sufficient for them to wish to have light and they would have Love as their consort. They wander like sick people, groping for love, and they find all the loves, all the foul things that man has so called, but they do not find the Love, because the Love is not gold, pleasure, power, but God.

Poor souls! Had they been less lazy and had they risen at the first invitation of the eternal Spouse, of God Who says: "Follow Me", of God Who says: "Open to Me", they would not have opened the door, in the outburst of their awakened love, when the disappointed Bridegroom was already far and had disappeared... And they would not have desecrated the holy impulse of the need of love in a mire which disgusts even unclean animals, as it is so useless and strewn with trite troubles, which were not flowers but thorns, which torture but do not crown. Neither would they have known the sneering words of the patrol guards, of the whole world, which, like God, but for opposite reasons, does not lose sight of the sinner, but waylays him to mock at him and criticise him.

Poor souls, beaten, despoiled and wounded by the whole world! Only God does not join in such pitiless scornful stone throwing. But He lets His tears drop to cure the wounds and put an adamant dress on His creature. *Always His creature...* Only God... and the children of God with the Father. Let us bless the Lord. He wanted Me to come back here for the sake of sinners to say to you: "Forgive. Always forgive. Make every bad thing become a good one, and every offence a grace". I do not only say to you "make". I say: imitate My attitude. I love and bless My enemies, because through them I have been able to come back to you, My friends.

Peace be with you all. »

The women in the crowd wave veils, the men branches: then all slowly depart after greeting Jesus.

« Will they have seen my shameless sister? »

« No, Lazarus. She was well concealed behind the hedge. We were able to see her because we were up here, the others could not see her. »

« She had promised us... »

« Why was she not to come? Is she not a daughter of Abraham? I want you, My brothers, and you, My disciples, to swear that you will not let her understand anything. Leave her alone. Will she laugh at Me? Never mind. Will she weep? Leave her alone. Will she be staying? Leave her alone. Will she be wanting to run away? Leave her alone. The secret of the Redeemer and of redeemers is to be patient, good, persevering and to pray. Nothing else. Every gesture is too much in the case of certain diseases... Goodbye, My friends. I am staying here to pray. Each of you may go to his own task and may God be with you. »

(Later, Jesus explains His attitude to His disciple and future apostle, Simon the Zealot...)

« And they would have liked Me to work a miracle immediately for her. And I could have done it. But I do not want a forced resurrection in hearts. I will force death and it will give Me back its victims. Because I am the Master of death and of life. But I will not force a resurrection on spirits, because they are not made of matter, which is lifeless without a soul, whereas spirits are immortal beings capable of rising of their own will. I give the first call and the first help, like one who opens a sepulchre in which a man still alive has been closed, and where he would die if he were to remain for a long time in that stifling darkness, and I let in air and light... then I wait. If the spirit is anxious to come out, it comes out. But if it does not want to come out, it grows darker and it goes to the bottom. But if it comes out!... Oh! If it comes out, I solemnly tell you that no one will be greater than a risen spirit. Only absolute innocence is greater than a dead person that becomes alive by force of love and for the joy of God... My greatest triumphs!

Look at the sky, Simon. You see there, stars, little stars and planets of various sizes. They all live and shine for God Who made them, and for the sun that illuminates them. But they are not all equally bright and of the same size. It will be the same in My Heaven. All the redeemed will have life through Me, and will receive brightness from My light. But they will not be all equally bright and great. Some will be plain star-dust, like the dust that makes Galathea milky, and will be those countless ones, who received from Christ, or rather, have taken from Him the minimum indispensable not to be damned, and only through the infinite mercy of God, after a long Purgatory, will come to Heaven. Others will be brighter and better formed, the just who have united their own will, please note that I am saying will, not good will, to the will of Christ and have obeyed My words not to be damned. Then there will be the planets, those of good will, and they will be brightest! Their light will be like a pure diamond or a bright gem of different hues: the red of a ruby, the violet of an amethyst, the gold of a topaz, the white of a pearl: the lovers faithful unto death for love, the repentants for love, the people active for love, the people immaculate for love.

And there will be some of those planets, and they will be the glory of the Redeemer, that will glare like amethysts, rubies, topazes and pearls, because they will be *everything* for the sake of love. They will be heroic to the extent of forgiving themselves for not having loved before, repentant to become saturated with expiations as Esther was saturated with perfumes before presenting herself to Ahasuerus, untiring in doing in a short time, the short time left to them, what they did not do in the years they spent in sin, pure to the extent of heroism in forgetting, also in their bodies, besides in their souls and thoughts, that they had senses. They will be the ones who, through their multifiform brightness, will attract the eyes of the believers, of the pure, of the repentant, of the martyrs, of the heroes, of the ascetics, of the sinners - and for each of those categories their brightness will be a word, a reply, an invitation, an assurance... »

POWERFUL IN EVIL - TO POWERFUL IN GOOD

(Vol. 3, p. 25-6)

(Some time later, Jesus arrives in Jerusalem with His apostles and some children. He tells some of them to put up tents in the Field of the Galileans ...)

... Lazarus arrives from the Bethany road with Maximinus, his inseparable companion. Jesus is facing the opposite direction and cannot see him. But the Iscariot does, and he informs the Master, Who leaves the children and goes towards His friend, smiling. Maximinus stops a few steps behind, to leave the two completely free in their first approach. And Lazarus covers the last few yards, as fast as he can, walking more painfully than ever, with a smile which trembles with pain on his lips, and shines with tears in his eyes. Jesus opens His arms and Lazarus falls on to His heart, bursting into tears.

« What, My dear friend? Are you still weeping?... » asks Jesus, kissing his temple. He is so much taller than Lazarus, from His shoulders upwards, and looks even taller, as Lazarus is bent in his embrace of love and respect.

At last Lazarus looks up and says: « Yes, I am weeping. Last year I gave You the pearls of my sad tears, it is therefore fair that I give You the pearls of my tears of joy. Oh! Master, my Master! I think that there is nothing more humble

and holy than good tears... And I give them to You, to say: "Thank You" for my Mary who is now a kind, happy, serene, pure good girl... Oh, much better than when she was a little girl. And I, I who felt that I was much above her, in my pride of an Israelite faithful to the Law, now I feel I am so tiny, so... nothing, as compared to her, who is no longer a woman, but a flame. A sanctifying flame. I... I cannot understand where she finds the wisdom, the words, the actions, which edify the whole household. I look at her as one looks at a mystery. But how could so much fire, such a jewel, be hidden under so much rottenness, and be there comfortably? Neither I nor Martha can ascend where she ascends. But how can she, if her wings were broken by vice? I do not understand... »

« And there is no need for you to understand. It is enough that I understand. But I tell you that Mary has turned the powerful energy of her being towards Good. She has bent her character towards Perfection. And since her character is of powerful absolutism, she thrusts herself unreservedly on that way. She makes use of her experience in evil, to be as powerful in good as she was in evil, and using the same method of giving herself entirely, as she did in evil, she has given herself entirely to God. She has understood the law of "love God with your whole being, with your body, your soul and with all your strength". If Israel were made of Maries, if the world were made of Maries, we would have the Kingdom on God on the earth, as it will be in the most high Heaven. »

« Oh! Master! And it is Mary of Magdala who deserves such words!... »

« It is Mary of Lazarus. The great friend, the sister of My great friend... »

JUDAS ISCARIOT

(Vol. 3, p. 152)

(Mary Magdalene tells Jesus of her apprehension about plans for her to be with Judas. She would rather be with Simon the Zealot, who is a great friend of her family. Jesus tells her He needs Simon for an important mission, and Mary replies:)

« Your brothers then, or John, whose heart is as innocent as a dove. Anyone of them, except him. My Lord, do not look at me so severely... Who has fed on lust, perceives it when it is near... I am not afraid of it. I can hold at bay someone who is much more than Judas. And I am terrified at not being forgiven, and it is my *ego*, and it is Satan who wanders round me, and it is the world... But if Mary of Theophilus is not afraid of anybody, Mary of Jesus is disgusted at the vice which had subdued her, and she... Lord... The man who craves for sensuality disgusts me... »

TEARS AND FORGIVENESS

(Vol. 3, p. 570)

(Jesus has given the young girl Anastasia to His old disciple Eliza as a daughter. He notices that the Magdalene is weeping, and asks why. She says:)

« I am weeping because I shall never have the purity of virgins, and my soul will weep for ever, without ever being sated... because I have sinned... »

« My forgiveness and your tears make you purer than they are. Come here and weep no more. Leave tears to those who have something of which they are ashamed... »

"MARY HAS CHOSEN THE BETTER PART"

(Vol. 3, p. 620-2)

(Jesus visits Bethany at another time, and is sitting at a pond with Mary Magdalene at His feet. He compares a pure soul with water that is limpid, still, and clear...)

« ... Watch: if I only stir its bottom with this rush, it becomes muddy. Waste and mud come to the surface. From clear it becomes yellowish, and no one would drink it any more. But if I remove the rush, it settles, and little by little it becomes once again limpid and beautiful. The rush: sin. The same applies to souls. It is repentance, believe Me, that cleanses... »

Martha arrives panting: « Are you still here, Mary? And I am so busy!... Time is flying. The guests will soon be here and there is so much to be done. The maids are busy baking bread, the servants flaying and cooking. I am preparing drinks and dishes, and I am laying the tables. But the fruit is still to be picked, and the honey and mint water is to be prepared... »

Mary does not pay much attention to her sister's complaints. Smiling blissfully, she continues to look at Jesus, without moving from her position.

Martha begs Jesus' help: « Master, look how hot I am. Do You think that I should be the only one to be so busy? Tell her to help me. » Martha is really annoyed.

Jesus looks at her, smiling half kindly and half ironically, or rather jokingly.

Martha becomes rather impatient: « I really mean it. Look how idle she is while I am so busy. And she sees... »

Jesus becomes serious: « It is not idleness, Martha. It is love. It was idleness *previously*. And you wept so bitterly because of that worthless idleness. Your tears lent wings to My efforts to save her and bring her back to your honest love. Do you want to forbid her to love her Saviour? Would you prefer her to be far from here, so that she would not see you work, but would be far also from Me? Martha, Martha! Have I to say that she (and Jesus lays His hand on her head) who has come from

so far, has excelled you in love? Have I to say that she, who did not know *one* word of love, is now learned in the science of love? Leave her to her peace! She was so ill! She is now convalescent, and she is recovering by drinking what fortifies her. She was tormented so violently... Now that she has come out of her nightmare, she looks around and within herself, and finds herself *new*, and discovers a *new* world. Let her become certain. With her “new ego”, she has to forget her past and conquer what is eternal... And the latter will not be conquered only through work, but also through adoration. He who gives a piece of bread to an apostle and a prophet, will receive his reward. But double reward will be given to him who will forget to feed himself in order to love Me, because his soul will be greater than his body, a soul that will cry even louder than human needs, also when the latter are lawful and right. You worry and fret about too many things, Martha. She is concerned with one only. That which is sufficient for her soul, and above all for her and your Lord. Forget useless things. Imitate your sister. Mary has chosen the better part, which will never be taken from her. When all virtues become superfluous, because they are no longer necessary to the citizens of the Kingdom, Charity alone will remain. It will last for ever. Alone and supreme. That is what Mary has chosen and has taken as her shield and pilgrim’s staff. Through it, as if she were flying with angelical wings, she will come to My Heaven. »

Martha, who feels mortified, lowers her head and goes away.

« My sister loves You very much, and is anxious to honour You... » says Mary to excuse her.

« I know, and she will be rewarded for that. But she needs to be purified of her human way of thinking, as this water was purified. Look how limpid it has become again, while we were speaking. Martha will be purified by the words I spoke to her. You... through the sincerity of your repentance. »

« No, through Your forgiveness, Master. My repenting was not sufficient to wash my great sin... »

« It was and will be sufficient, for the sisters who will imitate you. It will be sufficient for *all* the poor whose souls are diseased.

Sincere repentance is a purifying filter; love, then, preserves from further defilement. Thus, those who through life become adults and sinners, will be able to become as innocent as children again, and enter My Kingdom like them. Let us go home now. So that Martha may not be left too long in her grief. Let us go and smile at her as Friend and sister. »

(Jesus comments to Maria Valtorta - and to us - about all the visions she has seen of the Magdalene, many of which were given to Maria in advance of the present one:)

« No comment is required. The parable of the water is the comment on the repenting action of hearts.

You have thus seen the complete cycle of the Magdalene. From her death to the Life. Of all the resurrected people of My Gospel, she is *the greatest*. She was raised from seven deaths. She was reborn. You have seen her raise the stalk of her new flower higher and higher above the mud of the earth, like a flowery plant, and then bloom and smell sweetly for Me, and die for Me. You have seen her when she was a sinner, then when, thirsty, she approached the Fountain, then when she repented, then when she was forgiven, then you saw her as a lover, then as a pitiful woman bent over the slain Body of her Lord, then as a servant of My Mother, Whom she loves because She is My Mother; and finally, you have seen her as a repentant soul at the threshold of her Paradise.

O souls who are afraid, learn not to be afraid of Me, by reading the life of Mary of Magdala. O souls who love, learn from her how to love with seraphic ardour. O souls who have erred, learn from her the Science that will prepare you for Heaven.

I bless you all, to help you to rise. Go in peace. »

DEMONS, AND FREE WILL

(Vol. 4, p. 37)

(Jesus, having just expelled a demon from a man, explains to His apostles why this particular demon offered much resistance:)

« Listen to Me. Some people give themselves to Satan by opening a door to *one* capital vice. Some give themselves twice, some three times, some seven times. When one has opened his spirit to the seven vices, then a complete spirit enters him. Satan, the black prince, enters. »

« How could that man, still young, be possessed by Satan? »

« Oh! My friends! Do you know along which path Satan comes? Generally three are the beaten paths, and *one is never missing*. Three: sensuality, money, pride of the spirit. Sensuality is the one which is always present. Courier of the other concupiscences it passes, spreading its poison, and everything flourishes with satanic flowering. That is why I say to you: “Be the masters of your flesh”. Let that control be the beginning of everything else, as that slavery is the beginning of everything else. The man enslaved by lust, becomes thief, swindler, cruel, murderer, in order to serve his mistress. The very thirst for power is also related to the flesh. Do you not think so? It is so. Meditate on that and you will see whether I am mistaken. It was through the flesh that Satan entered man, and through the flesh he goes back into man, and he is happy if he can do so. He, one and sevenfold, enters with the proliferation of his legions of minor demons. »

« You said that Mary of Magdala had seven demons. You said so, and they were certainly demons of lust. And yet You freed her very easily. »

« Yes, Judas. That is true. »

« So? »

« So, according to you, My theory is wrong. No, My friend. That woman *wanted*, by that time, *to be freed from her possession*. She *wanted*. Will power is everything. »

“HOPE BEYOND HOPE”

(Vol. 5, p. 10-11)

(A large and imposing group of Pharisees and others have come to the house of Lazarus, to “pay their respects” to the dying man and to his two sisters. Martha and Mary are courteous to them, however the visitors taunt them about Jesus not being there. Mary, returning from Lazarus’ room with the Pharisee Helkai, discovers that the visitors are scheming to try and find out where Jesus is. She says:)

« No! It is not necessary. The Master - you are speaking of Him, are you not? The Master said that we must hope beyond hope, and in God only. And we will do that » says Mary in a thundering voice, as she comes back with Helkai, who departs from her at once and goes towards three Pharisees, bending down to speak to them.

« But he is dying, according to what I hear! » says Doras, who is one of the three.

« So what? Let him die! I will not obstruct God’s decree. and I will not disobey the Rabbi. »

« And what do you expect after his death, foolish woman? » says the Herodian mockingly.

« What? Life! » Her voice is a cry of absolute faith.

« Life? Ha! Ha! Be sincere. You know that He has no power against *real* death, and in your foolish love for Him, you do not want that to become known. »

« Go out, all of you! It would be for Martha to tell you. But she is afraid of you. I am only afraid of offending God, Who has forgiven me. And I am telling you in Martha’s stead. Go out, all of you. There is no room in this house for those who hate Jesus Christ. Out! Go to your gloomy dens! All out! Or I will get the servants to drive you out like a herd of unclean beggars. »

She is imposing in her wrath. The Judaeans slink away in the most cowardly way, in front of the woman. It is true that that woman looks like an enraged archangel...

As they leave the hall and cross the threshold, passing in front of Mary, she glares at them, creating for each an immaterial Caudine Fork, under which the pride of the defeated Judaeans is compelled to stoop. The hall is at last cleared out.

Martha collapses on the carpet bursting into tears.

« Why are you weeping, sister? I do not see why you should... »

« Oh! you offended them... and they offended you, they offended us... and now they will avenge themselves... »

« Be silent, silly woman! On whom do you expect them to avenge themselves? On Lazarus? They must decide first, and before they do that... No one revenges oneself on a man who is done for! On us? Are we in need of their bread to live? They will not touch our property. The shadow of Rome is cast over it. On what then? And even if they were able to do that, are we not both young and strong? Shall we not be able to work? Is Jesus not poor? Was our Jesus not a workman? Shall we not be more like Him, if we are poor and workers? You ought to be proud in becoming so! Hope for it! Ask God to grant it! »

« But what they said to you... »

« Ah! What they said to me! *It’s the truth*. And I repeat it to myself. I was unclean. I am now the ewe-lamb of the Shepherd! And the past is dead... »

A PLEDGE OF INFINITE LOVE

(Vol. 5, p. 83-5)

(Lazarus has died, and Jesus has raised him from the dead. Afterwards, Mary hears Lazarus promise he will be a good servant to a perfect Master. Jesus later asks Mary:)

« And what about you, Mary, will you become a good servant of your Lord? »

« You only know, Rabboni. I... only know that I was a big sinner. »

Jesus smiles: « Have you seen Lazarus? He, too, was seriously ill, and yet do you not think that he is quite well? »

« It is so, Rabboni. You have cured him. What You do is always complete. Lazarus has never been so strong and cheerful as he has been since he came out of the sepulchre. »

« You are right, Mary. What I do is *always complete*. Thus also your redemption is *complete*, because I worked it. »

« That is true, my beloved Saviour and Redeemer, my King and God. It is true. And, if You want it, I also shall be a good servant of my Lord. As for me, I want it, Lord. I do not know whether you do. »

« I want it, Mary. A good servant of Mine. Today more than yesterday. Tomorrow more than today. Until I will say to you: “Enough, Mary. It is time for you to rest”. »

« Agreed, Lord. I would like You to call me, then. As You called my brother out of the sepulchre. Oh! call me out of this life! »

« No, not out of this life. *I will call you to the Life, to the true Life*. I will call you out of the sepulchre that is the flesh and the Earth. I will call you to the wedding of your soul with your Lord. »

« My wedding! You love virgins, Lord... »

« I love those who love Me, Mary. »

« You are divinely good, Rabboni! That is why I could not set my mind at rest, when I heard people say that You were bad because You were not coming. Everything seemed to be collapsing around me. How hard it was to say to myself: “No. You must not accept this evidence. What seems to you to be obvious is only a dream. The real fact is the power, the goodness, the divinity of your Lord”. Ah! How much I suffered! So much grief for Lazarus’ death and for his words... Did he say anything to You? Does he not remember? Tell me the truth... »

« I never lie, Mary. He is afraid that he may have spoken and said what had grieved his life. But I reassured him, without lying, and he is now tranquil. »

« Thank You, Lord. Those words... have done me good. Yes. Just like the cure of a doctor who lays bare the roots of a disease and burns them. They finished destroying the old Mary. I still had too high an opinion of myself. Now... I measure the bottom of my abjection, and I know that I must go a *long* way to climb out of it. But I will do it, if You help me. »

« I will help you, Mary. I will help you also when I have gone away. »

« How, my Lord? »

« By increasing Your love in an immeasurable way. There is not other way for you. »

« Too mild when compared with what I have to expiate! Everybody is saved through love. Everybody obtains Heaven. But what is sufficient for the pure, the just, is not sufficient for the great sinner. »

« There is no other way for you, Mary. Because, whatever way you may take, it will still be love. Love, if you help people in My name. Love, if you evangelize. Love, if you live in isolation. Love, if you martyrize yourself. Love, if you will make people martyrize you. You can but love, Mary. It is your nature. Flames can but burn, whether they creep on the ground, burning straw, or they arise like a bright embrace around a trunk, a house or an altar to ascend towards the sky. Everyone has his nature. *The wisdom of the masters of the spirit rests in the ability to exploit the inclinations of men, directing them along the way where they can develop profitably.* Such a law exists also among plants and animals, and it would be silly to pretend that a fruit-tree should yield flowers only, or should bear other fruit than its natural ones, or that an animal should fulfil the functions typical of another species. Could you pretend that a bee, destined to make honey, should become a little bird that sings among the leafy branches of a hedge? Or that this little branch of an almond-tree that I am holding in My hands, with all the tree from which I picked it, instead of yielding almonds should exude sweet-smelling resins from its bark? A bee works, a bird sings, an almond-tree bears fruit, a resiniferous plant secretes resins. And each fulfils its task. Souls do the same. Your task is to love. »

« Then inflame me, Lord. Grant me it as a grace. »

« Is the power of love that you possess not sufficient for you? »

« It's too little, Lord. It could have served to love men. Not to love You Who are the infinite Lord. »

« And just because I am such, a limitless love would be required... »

« Yes, my Lord. That is what I want: that You give me a limitless love. »

« Mary, the Most High Who knows what love is, said to man: "You shall love Me with all your strength". He does not exact more than that. Because He is aware that it is already a martyrdom to love with all one's strength... »

« It does not matter, my Lord. Give me an infinite love, that I may love You as You deserve to be loved, that I may love You as I have not loved anybody else. »

« You are asking Me for a suffering that is like a fire that burns and consumes, Mary. It burns and consumes slowly... Think about it. »

« I have been thinking about it for such a long time, my Lord. But I dared not ask You. Now I know how much You love me. Just now I am aware of how much You love me, and I dare to ask You. Give me that infinite love, Lord. »

Jesus looks at her. She is in front of Him, still thin after so many long hours of watch and so much grief, wearing a modest dress and with her hair arranged in a simple way, like a girl without malice, her pale face full of eagerness, her imploring eyes already shining with love, looking more like a seraph than a woman. She is really the contemplator, asking for the martyrdom of absolute contemplation.

Jesus says one word only, after looking at her carefully, as if He wanted to weigh her will: « Yes. »

« Ah! my Lord! What a grace to die out of love for You! » she says falling on her knees and kissing Jesus' feet.

« Stand up, Mary. Take these flowers. They are those of your spiritual wedding. Be as sweet as the fruit of the almond-tree, as pure as its flower and as bright as the oil that is extracted from its fruit, when it is lit, and as sweet smelling as this oil, when sated with essences it is spread in banquets or on the heads of kings, scented with your virtues. Then you will really spread on your Lord the balm that He will appreciate infinitely. »

Mary takes the flowers but she does not stand up, and in advance of her balms of love, she kisses and sheds tears on the feet of her Master...

A PLEDGE OF FAITH

(Vol. 5, p. 330-2)

(Shortly before His Passion and Death, Jesus calls His women disciples to say goodbye. One of them, Johanna, speaks of unity and of faith in Jesus, Who replies:)

« Diamonds form slowly, Johanna. Ages of hidden fire are required... One must not be in a hurry, never... And one must never lose heart, Johanna... »

« And when a diamond becomes... ashes again? »

« It is an indication that it was not yet a perfect diamond. Patience and fire are still required. One has to start all over again, hoping in the Lord. What appears to be a failure the first time, often becomes a triumph the second time. »

« Or the third or the fourth time, and even more. I was a failure many times, but at last You triumphed, Rabboni! » says Mary of Magdala in her harmonious voice from the end of the hall.

« Mary is happy every time she can humble herself by remembering her past... » says with a sigh Martha, who would like that remembrance cancelled in every heart.

« Truly, sister, it is so! I am happy remembering my past. But not to humble myself, as you say, but to rise higher, urged by the memory of the evil done, and by gratitude to Him Who saved me. And also so that whoever hesitates for himself,

or for some person dear to him, may pluck up courage, and arrive at that faith that my Master says would be able to shift mountains. »

« And you have it! You blessed woman! You do not know what fear is... » says with a sigh Johanna, who is so meek and timid, and she appears to be even more so, if one compares her with the Magdalene.

« No, I do not know what fear is. It has never been in my human nature. Now that I belong to my Saviour, I am not even aware of it in my spiritual nature. Everything has served to increase my faith. Can one who was revived as I was, and who saw one's brother rise from the dead, be in doubt about anything? Nothing will ever make me doubt again. »

« As long as God is with you, that is, the Rabbi is with you... But He says that He will soon leave us. What will our faith then be? That is, your faith, because I have not yet gone beyond human frontiers... » says Plautina.

« His material presence or absence will not impair my faith. I will not be afraid. I am not being proud. I know myself. If the threats of the Sanhedrin should come true... I will not be afraid... »

« You will not be afraid of what? That the Just One is just? I shall not be afraid of that either. We believe that of many wise people whose wisdom we enjoy, I should say that we nourish ourselves with the life of their thought, ages after their death. But if you... » says Plautina insistently.

« I will not even fear for His death. Life cannot die. Lazarus, who was a poor man, rose from the dead... »

« He did not rise by himself, but because the Master evoked his spirit from the beyond. A deed that only the Master can accomplish. But who will evoke the Master's spirit, if the Master is killed? »

« Who? He. That is, God. God made Himself by Himself, God can raise Himself by Himself. »

« God... yes... according to your faith God made Himself by Himself. It is already difficult for us to admit that, as we know that one god descends from another through divine love. »

« Through obscene unreal love affairs, you should say » says Mary of Magdala rashly, interrupting her.

« As you wish... » says Plautina in a conciliatory tone, and is about to end her sentence, but Mary of Magdala precedes her once again and says: « But the Man, you mean, cannot raise Himself by Himself. But as He made Himself Man by Himself, because nothing is impossible to the Saint of Saints, so He will, by Himself, order Himself to rise from the dead. You cannot understand. You do not know the figures of our history of Israel. He and His wonders are in them.

And everything will take place as it was stated. I believe in advance, Lord. I believe everything. That You are the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin, that You are the Lamb of salvation, that You are the Most Holy Messiah, that You are the universal Redeemer and King, that Your Kingdom will have no end or boundary, and finally that death will not prevail over You, because life and death were created by God and are subject to Him like all other things. I believe. And if deep will be my sorrow at seeing You disregarded and despised, greater will be my faith in Your eternal Being. I believe. I believe in everything that has been said about You. I believe in everything You say. I believed also with regard to Lazarus, I was the only one who obeyed and believed, the only one who reacted against those men and those situations that wanted to persuade me not to believe. Only at the end, towards the end of the trial, I became confused... But the trial had lasted so long... and I thought that not even You, blessed Master, could approach the goal after so many days from his death... Now... I would not doubt any more even if, instead of days, a sepulchre were to be opened to give back its prey after it had been in its belly for months. Oh! my Lord! I know who You are! Filth has recognised the Star! » Mary has squatted at His feet, on the marble floor, no longer vehement, but meek, with an expression of adoration on her face raised towards Jesus.

« Who am I? »

« He Who is. That is what You are. The other part, the human person, is the garment, the necessary garment that has been put on Your brightness and Your holiness, so that it might come among us to save us. But You are God, my God. » And she throws herself on the floor kissing Jesus' feet, and she seems to be unable to remove her lips from the toes protruding from the long linen tunic.

« Stand up, Mary. Always hold on fast to your faith. And raise it like a star in stormy hours, so that hearts may stare at it and may hope, at least that... ».

A LAST ANOINTING

(Vol. 5, p. 363-6)

(It is now the evening of the Sabbath, before Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Jesus, His apostles and many of His disciples are sharing supper in a hall in the house of Lazarus. Mary Magdalene has left the room...)

Mary Magdalene comes back in. She is holding in her hands a thin-necked amphora, ending in a little bill, as pretty as the neck of a bird. The alabaster is of a precious rosy yellow hue, like the complexion of some blondes. The apostles look at her thinking, perhaps, that she is bringing some rare delicacy. But Mary does not go to the centre, inside the U of the table where her sister is. She goes behind the seat-beds, and stops between that of Jesus and Lazarus and that of the two Jameses.

She uncorks the alabaster vase and places her hand under the little bill, to receive a few drops of a viscous liquid that flows slowly from the open amphora. A strong smell of tuberose and other essences, a very intense pleasant scent, spreads in the hall. But Mary is not satisfied with the little quantity of perfume that flows. She stoops, and with a sharp blow, she breaks the neck of the amphora against the corner of Jesus' little bed. The thin neck falls on the floor, shedding scented drops on the marble pavement. The amphora now has a wide aperture, through which plenty unguent flows in thick gushes.

Mary places herself behind Jesus and spreads the thick oil on her Jesus' hair, she sprinkles all His locks with it, she stretches them, and then puts them in order with the comb taken from her own hair, tidying them on the adored head. Jesus'

fair-red hair shines now like dark gold and is very bright after the unction. The light of the chandelier, lit by the servants, is reflected on Jesus' fair hair like a beautiful copper-coloured bronze helmet. The scent is exhilarating. Through the nostrils it rises to the head and, spread as it is without restraint, it is so intense, that it is almost as exciting as sternutatory powder.

Lazarus, with his head turned round, smiles, watching how carefully Mary anoints and arranges Jesus' locks so that His hair may look tidy after the scented massage, while she does not worry about her plaits, which, no longer supported by the wide comb that helps the hairpins to hold them in place, are falling lower and lower on her neck, and are about to loosen completely on her shoulders. Martha also looks at her, smiling. The others are talking to one another in low voices, with different expressions on their faces.

But Mary is not yet satisfied. There is still plenty ointment in the broken vase, and Jesus' hair, although thick, is already saturated with it. Mary then repeats the loving gesture of an evening of long ago. She kneels down at the foot of the bed, she unties the buckles of Jesus' sandals and takes them off, and dipping the long fingers of her beautiful hand into the vase, she takes as much ointment as she can, and spreads it on His bare feet, toe by toe, then on the soles and heels, then up, on the malleoli, which she uncovers by throwing back His linen tunic, and lastly on the insteps, she delays on the metatarsi, which will be pierced by the dreadful nails, she insists until she finds no more balm in the hollow vase. Then she shatters it on the floor, and with her hands now free, she removes her big hairpins, she quickly looses her heavy plaits, and with that golden, bright, soft, flowing bundle of hair, she removes the excess of ointment from Jesus' feet that are dripping balm.

Judas, who so far has been silent, watching with lewd envious eyes the beautiful woman and the Master Whose head and feet she was anointing, raises his voice, *the only voice of open reproach*; some of the others, not all of them, had murmured something or had made gestures of surprised but also calm disapproval. But Judas, who has stood up to have a better view of the ointment spread on Jesus' feet, says with ill grace: « What a useless heathen waste! Why do that? And then we expect the Chiefs of the Sanhedrin not to speak of sin! Those are deeds of a lustful courtesan, and they do not become the new life you are leading, woman. They are too strong a recollection of your past! »

The insult is such that everybody is dumbfounded. It is such that everybody stirs, some sit up on the beds, some jump to their feet, everyone looks at Judas, as if he had suddenly become insane.

Martha flares up. Lazarus springs to his feet striking the table with his fist and says: « In my house... », then he looks at Jesus and controls himself.

« Yes. Are you all looking at me? You have all murmured in your hearts. But now that I echoed your words and I openly said what you thought, you are all ready to say that I am wrong. I will repeat what I said. I do not mean that Mary is the Master's lover. But I say that certain actions do not become Him or her. It is an imprudent action. And an unjust one. Yes. Why such waste? If she wanted to destroy the memories of her past, she could have given that vase and ointment to me. It was at least a pound of pure nard! And of high value. I could have sold it for at least three hundred denarii, as that is the price for nard of that quality. And I could have sold the vase, which was beautiful and precious. I would have given the money to the poor who crowd round us. We never have enough. And those asking for alms tomorrow in Jerusalem will be numberless. »

« That is true » say the others assenting. « You could have used a little for the Master and the rest... »

Mary of Magdala seems to be deaf. She continues wiping Jesus' feet with her loose hair that now, at its end, is also heavy with the ointment and darker than on the top of her head. Jesus' feet are smooth and soft in their shade of old ivory, as if they were covered with fresh skin. And Mary puts the sandals on the Christ's feet again, kissing each foot before and after putting the sandal on, deaf to everything that is not her love for Jesus.

Jesus defends her, laying His hand on her head bent in the last kiss, and saying: « Leave her alone. Why are you annoying and upsetting her? You do not realise what she has done. Mary has accomplished an action that is rightful and good with regard to Me. The poor will always be among you. I am about to go away. You will always have them, but you will soon not have Me any longer. You will always be able to give alms to the poor. Shortly to Me, to the Son of man among men, it will no longer be possible to give any honour, through the will of men, and because the hour has come. Love is light to her. She feels that I am about to die, and she wanted to anticipate the burial anointing for My body. I tell you solemnly, that wherever the Good News is proclaimed, this prophetic action of love of hers will be remembered. All over the world. Throughout ages. I wish God would turn every human being into another Mary, who does not value things, who entertains no attachment for anything, who does not cherish the least memory of the past, but destroys and treads on everything that is flesh and world, and breaks and spreads herself, as she did with the nard and the alabaster, on her Lord and out of love for Him. Do not weep, Mary. In this hour I repeat to you the words I spoke to Simon the Pharisee and to your sister Martha: "You are forgiven everything, because you have loved completely". You have chosen the better part. And it will not be taken away from you. Go in peace, My kind little sheep found again. Go in peace. The pastures of love shall be your food for ever. Stand up. Kiss also My hands that have absolved and blessed you... How many people these hands of Mine have absolved, blessed, cured, assisted! And yet I tell you, that the people whom I have assisted, are preparing torture for these hands... »

There is deathlike silence in the air, sultry with the intense scent. Mary, her loose hair clothing her shoulders and veiling her face, kisses the right hand that Jesus offers her, and cannot detach her lips from it...

Martha, deeply moved, approaches her and gathers her loose hair which she braids, caressing her, and then she wipes the tears on her cheeks, endeavouring to dry them...

No one feels like eating any more... Christ's words make them pensive...

ONLY THE MAGDALENE

(Vol. 5, p. 374-5)

(Jesus, alone with Lazarus, tells His friend He is about to be betrayed, and by whom, and will suffer exceedingly. Lazarus exclaims:)

« Oh! Master! You are weeping?! I know that You wept also in front of my sepulchre, because You loved me. But now... You are weeping again. You are frozen. Your hands are already as cold as those of a corpse. You are suffering... You are suffering too much!... »

« I am the Man, Lazarus. I am not only the God. I have the sensitiveness and affections of men. And My soul is distressed, thinking of My Mother... And yet, I tell you, My torture of enduring to have My Traitor close to Me has become *so monstrous*, as well as having to bear the satanic hatred of a whole world, and the deafness of those who, if they do not hate, cannot love actively either, because to love actively is to succeed in being what the loved person wants and teaches, whereas here!... Yes, many love Me. But they have remained "what they were". They did not assume another *ego* for My sake. Do you know who was able, among My most intimate ones, to change nature in order to become of Christ, as Christ wants? *One only*: your sister Mary. She started from *complete* perverted animality, to arrive at an angelical spirituality. And she achieved that only through the power of love. »

« You redeemed her. »

« I redeemed them *all* with My word. But *she alone* changed completely, through active love... »

Appendix

THE POEM AND THE CHURCH

*(Much has been made of alleged opposition from the Vatican to the publication of "The Poem of the Man-God", and of "The Poem's" inclusion in the "Index of Forbidden Books" - the Index which was subsequently repealed in 1966. The following extracts are from Father Roschini's "The Virgin Mary in the Writings of Maria Valtorta" (p. 21 *), and from a statement by Bishop Roman Danylak, formerly of Toronto, Canada, and now stationed in Rome.)*

FATHER ROSCHINI

"On January 6, 1960, the *Osservatore Romano* published an article about *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio* as well as a stern censure against it. However, in the article it frankly admitted that we could find in this work 'lessons in Marian Theology which show a complete knowledge of the latest studies by present day specialists on the matter ... These theological lessons are written in the very terms which a professor of our day would use.'

(In a footnote Fr. Roschini's editor adds:) "Oddly enough, the officials who used this censure were not even aware of Pope Pius X11's declaration on February 26, 1948, during the special audience he granted to Fr. Berti and two witnesses ... Within one year, Fr. Berti was able to tell the newly appointed officials of the audience. Within weeks, the censure was tacitly acknowledged to have been invalid and permission was granted to publish the second edition of: *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio*."

[Pope Pius X11's often-quoted declaration was: "Publish this work as it is. There is no need to give an opinion on its origin, whether it be extraordinary or not. Whoever reads it will understand. (These days) we hear of so many visions and revelations. I am not saying that all of them would be true, but there are some of them that are authentic".]

* Father Roschini, formerly Professor at the Pontifical Lateran University of Rome, was a philosopher, theologian, writer of saints' lives, and a mariologist of great renown. An author of over 125 books, he said that his most important one was *The Virgin Mary in the Writings of Maria Valtorta*. He died in 1977.

BISHOP DANYLAK

Thirty-two years of polemics have subsided; the major issues bandied about by various writers, for and against the authenticity of the writings of Maria Valtorta, have been resolved. There are many questions that still await their resolution. Maria herself, in truth and humility, could not ascribe to herself the principle authorship of *the Poem of the Man-God* – as it was known in the first English translations – or *the Gospel of Jesus Christ as Dictated to Me* – as Maria requested her publishers to call this work. Church authorities still insist that the publishers ascribe solely to Maria, the authorship, not only of this work, but also the many other writings that issued from Maria's pen between the years 1943-1954.

And in a sense they are right, for the Church has always ascribed the human authorship of the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and the New Covenants to the authors whose names the different books bear, yet acknowledge the Bible as the work of the Holy Spirit Himself. These, and so many other questions, will have to be addressed when and if a

cause for the beatification of this elect victim is presented to the Holy See. This was the case with Padre Pio and with Don Orione of our century, and with many saints of the earlier centuries.

Yet although the vituperatives have subsided, there are some who continue to have problems that arose from the unsettled issues of the past.

The principal objections of the censors, that had placed *The Poem of the Man-God* on the Index of Forbidden Books, were that the publishers of the first edition, purporting to present private visions and revelations, had not submitted the work to prior ecclesiastical censorship – which is true. Further, they accused the book of archaeological, geographical and biblical inaccuracies, of bad theology, of foppish sentimentality, etc., etc.

Two Servite theologians - Fr. Corrado Berti, who prepared a scholarly theological and scriptural commentary to the second edition of *the Poem*, and Fr. Gabriel Roschini, a noted Mariologist, and author of *The Virgin Mary in the Writings of Maria Valtorta* – attest to the orthodoxy of the Catholic faith, the factual accuracy of the biblical geography and archaeology described in *The Poem*, and the profundity of theological insight in these writings. I wish to include the authority of several other reputable scholars, many of whom were personal friends and admirers of Maria Valtorta in her lifetime. Archbishop Carinci, secretary for many years of the Congregation for Saints; Msgr. Lattanzi, a renowned moral theologian in his time; Card. Augustine Bea, a noted biblical scholar and former president of the Pontifical Biblical Commission; Prof. Corsanego, consistorial advocate for the cause of saints; and many others. For an extensive description of notables and their comments about Maria Valtorta and her work, cf. the second Italian edition of *The Poem of the Man-God*, edited and annotated by the late Fr. Corrado Berti, Servite and professor of theology. Dr. Emilio Pisani, editor and publisher of the writings of Maria Valtorta, continuing the work of his late father Michele, published a review of these writings until the present, in his study, pro and contra Maria Valtorta.

I wish to add to these testimonies my own experiences in reading these lives of Christ and His Blessed Mother. Though gifted herself with artistic and poetic sensibility, Maria's masterly treatment of the story - that develops with the conception of the Blessed Virgin to St. Anne, Her birth, the Annunciation and birth of Christ, the public life of Jesus, His teachings and miracles, through the events preceding the passion, the passion itself, the glorious Resurrection and Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the early life of the Church until the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin – surpasses the genius of many of the great writers of world literature. Her presentation of the cast of hundreds of characters - the profound insights into the inner life; the psychology and emotions of Jesus as He responded to a multiple variety of situations; Maria's portrayal of the responsiveness of the apostles; the friends and foes of Jesus – transcends the capacities of even the most genial and gifted of writers. And in all of this, she does not confuse persons, events, and places. Through her, the reader enters into the very hearts of Jesus and His Mother. This work – call it Poem or Dictations of Jesus – is not only faithful to the Gospel, but it is the Gospel of Christ expanded. It is a gift of Christ for these, our days, when Jesus is maligned, denied, spurned, persecuted – in His Church, and in a world that is rapidly becoming submerged in the apostasy of faith.

Listen to the testimony of the noted Mariologist, Fr. Roschini, who availed himself of the writings of Valtorta for his course in Mariology in the 1970s at the Pontifical Gregorian University. His course notes became the basis for his final and definitive book on Mariology, *The Virgin Mary in the Writings of Maria Valtorta*. Fr. Roschini had been initially very standoffish to the writings of Valtorta. He had a change of heart, overcame his initial reserve, and discovered an immense treasure of insight into the mystery of Mary. He comments in the introduction to this, his last book on Mary (pg. 21 of the English translation), as follows: "On January 6, 1960, the *Osservatore Romano* published an article about *Il Poema dell'Uomo Dio* as well as a stern censure against it. However, in the article it frankly admitted that we can find in this work 'lessons in Marian theology which show a complete knowledge of the later studies by present-day specialists on the matter ... These theological lessons are written in the very terms which a professor of our day would use...'

And in a footnote, Fr. Roschini adds that these officials were not even aware of Pope Pius XII's declaration of February 26, 1948, during a special audience he had granted to Fr. Berti and two witnesses – Fr. Andrea M. Cecchin, Prior, and Fr. Romualdo Migliorini - all three theologians. (Cf. *Osservatore Romano*, Feb. 27, 1948 with the commendation: "**Publish this work as it is. There is no need to give an opinion on its origin, whether it be extraordinary or not.**")

In conclusion, as a priest and bishop of the eastern Church, as I prayed the Divine Office of the Byzantine Church, that has faithfully preserved the names and the early Christian traditions of the protagonists of the early apostolic community and the disciples of Christ, I was surprised to find them alive, as real living personalities - friends and disciples of Jesus from His infancy, His adolescence, and the mature years of His public life in the life of Christ.

Maria had never studied scriptures, and the archaeology and geography of Palestine. She did not peruse the Divine Office of the Roman, still less of the eastern, Church. The Lord accepted the generous sacrifice of her cross, and of dying to herself, and He gave to us, through her, this precious gift of the total Gospel, for this our day.

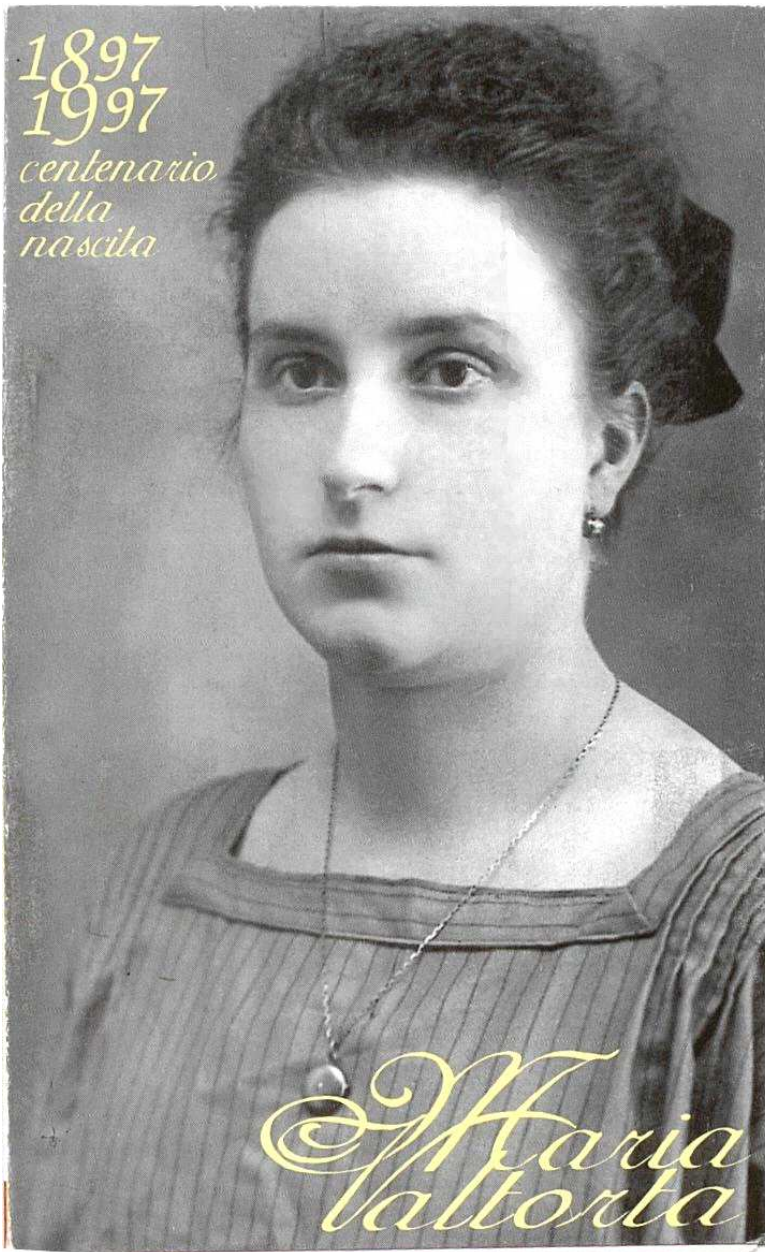
+ Roman Danylak,

titular bishop of Nyssa.

Easter 1999

APOLOGIA PRO MARIA VALTORTA

by Joseph Johnson 2004





EXTERNAL SUPPORT OF AUTHORITY

Many conservative and traditional Catholics have been misled by an article circulating since 1992, referring to Cardinal Ratzinger's letter of 1985 and a summary of the seven "reasons" for condemnation of The Poem of the Man God in 1960. There is a good analysis of this in a new book Fireworks (Kolbe Publications Sherbrooke, Canada, 1996, pp. 78-9, 87-107). It points out (p. 105) that Father Giraud of the Holy Office in early 1962 **reversed** the previous decision of that Office to place The Poem on the Index of Forbidden Books. Since then acceptance of The Poem has spread widely with imprimatur granted by Bishop Roman Danylak in Rome for all the approved English translations. The canonical approval to publish, given by Pope Pius XII has not been seriously challenged. Cardinal Gagnon in Rome (Jan 3, 1992) said that many good people are benefiting from Valtorta's works, but that Cardinal Ratzinger's office has only the negative side of the story. He suggested that more people write to Cardinal Ratzinger to request a clarification.

Given the genuine approval, widespread growth, and immense spiritual fruit of **The Poem of the Man-God** it would be rash to deny refuse or fight against this great gift of God (see Gamaliel's advice, Acts 5:38-9).

Let us not forget that even the works of St. Thomas Aquinas were at first condemned, as were the person of St. Athanasius and the writings of Saint Faustina Kowalska. Truth will find its way in the end, and the judgment of Pope Pius XII will be clearly vindicated. In 1978 an anthology was published in Portuguese with the Imprimatur of the Archbishop of Belem, Brazil. In India seven bishops have sent warm letters of congratulations to the publisher of the Malayan translation. One of these bishops gave his Imprimatur in 1993. Don't forget, the approval of Pope Pius XII was more than an Imprimatur (permission to publish). It was an **instruction** to publish, given at the Vatican before official witnesses on February 26, 1948.

INTERNAL VALUE OF THE WORK

Now for the intrinsic arguments. Just about all the objections to The Poem involve taking quotes somehow out of context.

I distinguish **three ways to take a text out of context** and thus distort its meaning.

First there is **verbal or literal context**. The Bible has these words: "...There is no God" (Ps. 52), and "Christ died in vain" (Gal. 2:21). No one can say that the Bible says (affirms) these statements, because in context we have:

"...The **fool** says in his heart, there is no God"; and "*If justice comes by the law*, then Christ died in vain". Yet the verbal context could also be made clear somewhere else, e.g. St. Paul saying "I would wish to be anathema from Christ", in Rom 9:3, can only be understood rightly in the light of verses 38/9 of the previous chapter, and the rest of Chapters 9, 10 and 11. Likewise with Our Lord's words about cutting off a hand or plucking out an eye (Matt. 5:29-30) in a true verbal context we must understand the literary expression of *hyperbole*. It would be wrong to take it too literally. In the same way, Our Lord has given Maria Valtorta some surprising expressions. Without putting these into context, one could raise an eyebrow every few hundred pages! One example might be Christ speaking to the pagan Romans about the human soul. He calls it a spark of the divinity, yet if you keep reading it is made clear that He is not speaking literally, for He tells us that the soul is created, separate from God yet made in His image and likeness. The spark of the divinity is an allegory, an image that better expresses our understanding.

Second is the **cultural and temporal context**. It comes as a surprise for some to realise that Christ our Saviour was truly human, and with other characters of the Gospel, was of quite a different cultural stock (from ourselves). Jewish first century styles and customs greatly differ from Western twentieth century ones. Even today, what is normal and proper in Palestine or Italy might be considered queer and sinful in America or England. In these latter countries we know it is not proper for men to kiss each other unless they are of close family, or they are enthusiastic U.K. soccer players kicking a goal. Yet in the East it is entirely proper and even expected. Sometimes they even may kiss on the lips as a sign of special affection without any unnatural or sexual connotation. Recall Our Lord at the house of Simon the Pharisee rebuking him for not giving the customary kiss (Luke 7:45). It would be calumny in trying to impute evil motives in the chaste, loving and manly kisses revealed in The Poem. No one who has read it in context entertains any suspicion on this score, even if they are surprised.

Thirdly, the most important context is the **doctrinal or faith context**. This is the norm for interpreting Sacred Scripture consistent with the unanimous view of the early Fathers or the analogy of faith. i.e. we must always interpret in conformity with the Magisterium of the Church.

The Vatican newspaper in 1960 hinted at an error in Valtorta's account of the sin of Eve. Fr. Roschini O.S.M. exposes the falsity of this charge in his book The Virgin Mary in the Writings of Maria Valtorta (Kolbe., Sherbrooke, Canada. 1986, pp. 276-9). He points out that The Poem teaches precisely what St. Thomas taught; that the first sin was a complex one involving pride, disobedience, gluttony and finally lust (*fuerunt plures deformitates* " *Summa 1 li 9.82. a.2, ad 1*). He goes on to quote 10 saints and numerous other theologians in support of Valtorta! **This is context.**

With Valtorta, as with the canonical Scriptures, there are difficulties that are easily resolved by distinction from Thomistic philosophy such as: general vs. specific, strictly vs. broadly, properly vs. allegorically, in fieri vs. in facto esse, ad esse vs. ad melior esse, simpliciter vs. quodammodo. These distinctions are usually not needed for the simple faithful as the context gives them the truth without danger.

The Most Quoted "Error"

It has been described as blasphemous that Our Lady could say what is recorded in pages 37-42 of The Poem. There the Blessed Virgin is three years old, talking with her parents. She expresses her great desire to see the Saviour, Who She knows

will come for sinners. She asks a logical question: can I be more saved and loved by Christ if I become a big sinner? The question shows that even with Her infused knowledge, Mary was ignorant of the great gift of Her Immaculate Conception which St. Joachim then explains to Her with a beautiful comparison. There is no dispute in Catholic theology about Mary's Immaculate Conception (since 1854) but there is a lawful and traditional disagreement about the **extent** of Her infused knowledge. On these disputed questions of theology, no one has the right to call the other opinion blasphemous. Nor should Our Lady's statement be taken out of context to condemn the whole work.

Thus you have the answer to the main objections. The writings of Maria Valtorta are in no way opposed to the Catholic faith or morals, they were never put on the Index of Forbidden Books for this reason, and they continue to edify the Church resulting in many conversions and vocations. Valtorta's writings were specially given by Christ Our Lord as a gift to His priests, to support the work of His Vicar St Pius X to combat Modernism (see *The Poem*. vol. 5, pp 946), and to reveal the truth of the Gospel in a special way. They fill in the gaps. They put you in the picture. They amplify the sacred text, e.g. the Passion may be five pages in your Gospel, it is 100 pages in *The Poem*. The popularity of these books has spread widely.

If *The Poem* at times seems sentimental, it is really the remedy of sentimentalism in matters of faith. It is no more sensual than the works of St. Ignatius, who encourages the use of all five senses, plus imagination, in his 'Spiritual Exercises'. The Biblical book Canticle of Canticles could be charged with the same falsehood by the spiritually immature. Valtorta always leads from the senses to the spiritual, the sublime and the supernatural. It is a masterpiece of sacred literature, unlike anything ever written. In some ways it is like being in the first seminary, trained by the Master Himself. A professor and sculptor friend of Maria Valtorta wrote in 1965: "(her works) have completely transformed my inner life. The knowledge of Christ has become so total as to make the Gospels clear to me and make me live them in everyday life better (Lorenzo Ferri). All those among our parishioners who have read Valtorta say the same thing.

May God give us the grace to see His truth and bless these works, especially the great work of spreading His truth and love on earth. With Pius XII I say: "**He who reads will understand**"

o o o o o

Private Revelations and Discernment of Spirits

by Fr. William G. Most

Private Revelations

St. John of the Cross, a Doctor of the Church and one of the greatest of mystic theologians, who had had so many special favors himself, is very severe with persons who desire to be the recipients of visions and revelations. He never tires of repeating that the proximate means of union with God in this life is the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. True growth consists in intensified love, which is founded on faith and hope. Now although St. John encourages everyone to aim at infused contemplation, even though relatively few attain it, he strongly reproves anyone who desires to be the recipient of a vision or revelation. They desire to see; faith holds on without seeing.

St. Teresa of Avila, who herself had an abundance of visions, takes a similar stand. She admits that great profit can be had from such things when they are genuine and are received in the proper spirit. Yet she says (*Interior Castle* 6. 9): "I will only warn you that, when you learn or hear that God is granting souls these graces, you must never beg or desire Him to lead you by this road. Even if you think it is a very good one... there are certain reasons why such a course is not wise."

She then goes on at length to explain her reasons: First, such a desire shows a lack of humility; second, one thereby leaves self open to "great peril because the devil has only to see a door left a bit ajar to enter"; third, the danger of auto-suggestion: "When a person has a great desire for something, he convinces himself that he is seeing or hearing what he desires." Fourth, it is presumption for one to want to choose his own path, as only the Lord knows which path is best for us. Fifth, very heavy trials usually go with these favors: could we be sure of being able to bear them? Sixth, "you may well find that the very thing from which you had expected gain will bring you loss."

She then adds that there are also other reasons, and continues with some wholesome advice that one can become very holy without this sort of thing: "There are many holy people who have never known what it is to receive a favor of this sort, and there are others who receive such favors even though they are not holy." We think of the frightening words of Our Lord in Mt. 7.22-23. Speaking of the last day, He said: "Many will say to me on that day: 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out devils in your name, and work many miracles in your name? And then I will tell them: I never knew you. Depart from me you workers of iniquity.'" St. Teresa adds: "It is true that to have these favors must be a very great help towards attaining a high degree of perfection in the virtues; but one who has attained the virtues at the cost of his own work has earned much more merit."

It is, then, a sad mistake to center one's spiritual life about recounting and hoping for special revelations. Yes, we do well to follow those that have been approved by the Church, such as Lourdes and Fatima (the Church does not require belief in any private revelation). But even there, they should not be the center of our spiritual lives except in so far as they are an exhortation to what the Gospel already calls for. Thus the three requests of Fatima are all just repetitions of what general theology provides: 1) Penance: which in the Gospel sense, means moral reform and reparation for sin; 2) Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary: this is merely the natural conclusion of learning what our Father's plan is, of His approach to us in which He has given her an all-pervading role; and 3) The Rosary, consisting mostly of lines from the Gospel, plus prayers composed by the Church.

Discernment of Spirits

Apparitions and the Spiritual Life

Since there is today so great a number of alleged apparitions of Our Lady, and since so many become so attached to them as to almost center their spiritual lives about them, it is good to consider some principles about visions and revelations.

First, these things are definitely not part of the core of the spiritual life. St. John of the Cross, the Mystical Doctor, is very hard on these things. He goes so far as to tell souls that if a vision comes, they should at first not accept, to hold off and consider its authenticity only if it comes again. The reason he gives is this: faith holds on without seeing proof; those who want visions want to see, not to believe without seeing (cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Spiritual Life* II, 575-88 and Poulain, *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, 299-399).

Authority of the Church

We distinguish two kinds of actions by the local bishops of places of alleged apparitions:

1) a decision that it is or is not authentic. Since the Church herself has no providential protection in the area of private revelations, the bishop could be in error. We are not obliged to believe him, or even the Pope himself in such a case.

2) an order to all not to go in pilgrimage to the place of the supposed visions. This is a different matter, it is an exercise of authority, which the local bishop does have. Therefore if there are violations of this order, and yet visions seem to continue, we may be absolutely certain that the visions are false. Our Lady or the Saints will never appear to promote disobedience. Even if there seem to be benefits to the devotion of people, we must still obey. And we need to recall how demanding the Church is of proof for alleged miracles. At Lourdes, after thousands of seeming miracles, the Church has checked and approved only a little over 60 cases since the start of that shrine.

The objection will be raised: The Church was so slow in approving Fatima, and so people lost so many graces while waiting. We reply: They lost nothing at all. Visions are not like sacraments, which produce their effect by their own power (that is, the power of Christ working through them) in those who do not place an obstacle. One of the most approved series of visions are those of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary. On one occasion, He had told her to do something, but her Superior did not approve. When He came again, she asked Him about this, and He replied: "Therefore not only do I desire that you should do what your Superior commands, but also that you should do nothing of all that I order without their consent. I love obedience, and without it no one can please me" (Autobiography of St. Margaret Mary # 47).

We can understand this: He Himself redeemed the world precisely by obedience (Cf. Rom 5:19). Without obedience His sacrifice would have been empty externalism, the kind God reproved in the ancient Jews in Isaiah 29:13: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Lumen gentium # 3 says "by His obedience He brought about redemption." So there is no grace to be had by disobeying. To wait will not entail any loss at all; rather, God's favor will be upon those who obey.

If the local bishop does not approve, it is not good to say: let us wait for Rome to speak. Normally Rome respects the local bishop, and is highly unlikely to reverse his decision. Even if Rome did reverse it, we would have no guarantee, for, as we said, the providential protection promised to the Church does not cover private revelations.

PRINCIPLES FOR DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

What kind of Spirit is at work when someone receives a vision, a revelation, or a more routine favor? To determine this is called the discernment of spirits. It is of great importance to find the right answer. It is evident that there can be three sources: good spirit, evil spirit, auto-suggestion.

Poulain, *Graces of Interior Prayer*, p. 322, thinks that at least three fourths of the revelations given to those who have not reached high sanctity are illusions. And there are many cases known of illusions even in canonized saints. So St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross are quite prudent their advice concerning privately revelations (which we have already seen). We think also of the words of Our Lord (Jn 20:29): "More blessed are they who have not seen and have believed."

[In what follows, the numerous examples given by the author have been somewhat reduced in the interest of brevity.]

Five causes of error in revelations

(1) *Faulty interpretation of visions by the recipient.*

St. John of the Cross warns about this in *Ascent of Mount Carmel* II. 19. Thus St. Joan of Arc in prison had a revelation that she would be delivered by a great victory--it was her martyrdom, which she did not suspect.

Prophecies of punishment, and promises of special favors should be considered as conditional. E.g., the Scapular promise should not be taken to refer to mere physical wearing of the Scapular: it must be, as Pius XII said, the outward sign of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, that is really lived. If it is used this way then even if the vision of St. Simon Stock might not be true, the promise will be fulfilled, as we explained earlier.

2. *Visions of the life and death of Christ, or other historic scenes, must be understood to be approximate only.*

Thus some saw Jesus with three nails, some with four. Blessed Veronica of Binasco saw the whole life of Christ, and so did St. Frances of Rome and Catherine Emmerich. The Bollandists, Jesuit experts in studying the lives of the Saints, tell us there are many historical errors in these.

3. *Human action may mingle with the divine action.*

St. Catherine Labouré foretold many events correctly, but failed on others. It is especially easy for this to happen with ideas that appeal to our own desires or fit with preconceived ideas. Benedict XIV (Heroic Virtue III. 14. p. 404) said: "The revelations of some holy women canonized by the Apostolic See whose saying and writings in rapture and derived from rapture are filled with errors."

4. *A true revelation may later be altered involuntarily by the recipient.*

This happens especially with intellectual locutions which need to be translated into words. Again, God may seem to promise a cure without saying if it is total or partial, sudden or slow, or even physical or moral. Again if a revelation is received in an instant, but it takes long to write it all down. St. Bridget admits such a thing in her own case.

5. *Secretaries may alter without intending to do so.*

The accuracy of the text is disputed in the works of Mary of Agreda, Catherine Emmerich, and Mary Lataste. It has been shown that 32 passages from the latter have been taken word for word from St. Thomas' *Summa Theologiae*. Similarly, compilers sometimes modify them. The first edition of Catherine Emmerich had St. James the Elder present at the death of the Blessed Virgin. When it was seen that this was incompatible with Acts of Apostles, it was dropped from later editions.

Five Causes of False Revelations

1. Pure bad faith, fakery.

Magdalen of the Cross was a Franciscan of Cordova, born in 1487, who entered a convent at age of 17. From the age of 5 the devil appeared to her as various Saints, led her to desire to be considered a saint. At 13 he said who he was, offered an agreement: he would spread her reputation for holiness, and give her at least 30 years of pleasures. She agreed, and it all came true--ecstasies, levitation, prophecies, simulated stigmata. At door of death she confessed. Exorcism was needed.

2. Overactive imagination.

We said above that human faculties may mingle with the divine action. Someone may imagine a saint is near him. He may imagine intellectual locutions. Cf. St. John of Cross, *Ascent* II. 29. St. Teresa said (*Interior Castle* 6.6) that if one has once had a real vision, he will recognize the deception.

Hallucinations can come from excess in abstinence, fasting, and vigils.

3. Illusion in thinking one remembers things that never happened.

Some may imagine they have had visions. Some invent stories and convince themselves--in good faith. Some relate trips to far lands where they have never been. The line between imagination and reality is dim in young children--something similar can happen later too. This is not rare. If a spiritual director finds his advice has little effect, there is reason for seeing illusion. Some make false charges in courts in this way.

4. The Devil may give false visions or revelations.

We saw this in the case of Magdalen of the Cross.

5. Predictions by falsifiers.

Some make these at first for their own amusement, then find they have a tiger by the tail. St. Bonaventure (*De profectu religiosorum* III. 76) said he was fed up with such things, on the troubles of the Church and the end of the world. During the great Western Schism at end of 14th century, there were many holy mortified men who had false revelations, and even thought they would be the pope. At fifth Lateran Council in 1516 Leo X had to publish an order prohibiting preachers from giving public prophecies. There were many during the French Revolution, clear and in detail on the past, vague on the future.

In 19th century there was an epidemic of prophecy especially on "the great Pope and the great King" inspired by the 17th century commentary on the Apocalypse by Ven. Holzhauser. Pius IX in an Allocution of April 9, 1872 said: "I do not give much belief to prophecies, because those especially that have come recently do not deserve to be read."

What degree of certainty or probability is possible?

1. When God so wills, He can give full certainty to the recipient. We who are not the recipients can also be sure of revelations given to another, e.g., the OT prophets, for they furnished certain signs of their mission. This can be done by miracles worked in a framework in which a tie is made between the miracle and the claim.

2. Beyond this area, probability is the most that is attainable. We need then to work with various signs. We should: (a) Get detailed information on the person to whom the revelation seems to have been made; and on what facts seem to have been revealed.

Often we must work by exclusion, i.e., show that it comes not from the devil, nor from the human mind. But psychology still cannot give full replies on some things that seem supernormal operations of the human mind: hypnotism, somnambulism, telepathy, thought-reading, etc. For data on the uncertainties of psychology see Richard M. Restak, [Neurologist in Washington D. C.] "See no Evil. The Neurological defense would blame violence on the damaged brain" in *The Sciences*, July/August 1992, pp. 16- 21.

3. Inquiries to be made about the alleged recipient:

(1) If the person is canonized, the Church has already checked--but canonization does not guarantee the truth of any supposed revelation given to the Saint.

(2) If not canonized: (a) What are the natural qualities or defects, physical, intellectual, and moral. Is he sincere, cool-headed, of sound judgment, of perfect mental equilibrium. Or is his mind weakened by poor health, vigils, fasts etc.

(b) Degree of education of the recipient--what books he has read, what information he may have picked up from other more learned persons. Much care is needed. Some say that Mary of Agreda was an ignorant girl. But she could read, knew the Bible well, and Cardinal Gotti showed several of her revelations were borrowed from a 15th century book, *The Raptures of Blessed Amadeus*. And she admits the help of theologians. Yet she said, in exaggeration: "No human mind could have imagined this work" (III, # 789).

(c) What virtues does the person have? What was his general level before and after the alleged revelation? If a great advance in holiness is seen, and it seems to have come from the revelation, there is good probability for the revelations. We think of the Fatima children. But if the seer has stayed at the ordinary level of virtue, the visions come under some suspicion, for would God use extraordinary means to lead to a merely ordinary state of holiness? Exception: God might use an ordinary person to help others. The message of Fatima for example would have ample justification even if the children had not become holy: this message God wanted given to the world. And the three things asked for are theologically sound and called for independently of any revelation.

(d) We need to watch out for the work of Satan--he may really promote good things for a while, provided that in the long run he gains. The revelations of Necedah, Wi. seemed to have good fruits, yet were false. Rosaries were said to change to gold. Similarly for Bayside. But disobedience showed them false. St. Margaret Mary was told by Our Lord: (Autobiography, # 57): "Listen, My Daughter, and do not lightly believe and trust every spirit, for Satan is angry and will try to deceive you. So

do nothing without the approval of those who guide you. Being thus under the authority of obedience, his efforts against you will be in vain, for he has no power over the obedient."

Sometimes Satan urges people to immoderate penances, so that they will in time give up. He may make contemplatives desire the active life, or vice versa. Blessed Jordan of Saxony, second General of the Dominicans, contracted a high fever. He had a prior skilled in medicine who told him to sleep on a soft bed. But Satan appeared to Jordan in the night and rebuked his self-indulgence. Jordan gave into this two nights. But the third night Jordan saw that he should obey his doctor, and so did. Jordan had previously put himself under obedience to the doctor.

(e) Humility is a major key. Satan has the greatest horror of it. (Cf. the above words of Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary.) Yet Satan can lead a person to false humility. Pride shows in contempt for others, in an independent spirit as to the Superior and the spiritual director, in obstinacy in opinions, in refusal to submit to examinations (cf. Teresa Neumann), in anger. It shows too in desiring to publish the graces the person thinks he has received--when it is not necessary. Humility leads to wanting to hide them, except in cases of real usefulness.

(f) Has the person claimed revelations before? Made predictions that were not fulfilled? If there was no reason to suppose the failed predictions were conditional, then they will seem not of divine origin.

(g) Has the recipient suffered great trials before or after the revelation, such as sicknesses, contradictions, lack of success. Extraordinary graces are very likely to bring great trials, as St. Teresa of Avila remarked, (cited above), in Interior Castle 6. 9. It is specially likely that the recipient will encounter skepticism or hostility. Bl. Juliana of Liege was chosen by God to establish the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament. Visions on it began two years after her entering the novitiate at age 16 in 1208. Only 22 years later did she dare to submit her project to some learned theologians, who approved it, but her enemies got revenge by pillaging her convent. In 1256 the Bishop of Liege established the Feast in one parish in his diocese, but died the same year. The convent was again pillaged. She was calumniated, forced to leave the convent, wandered during the last 20 years of her life, and died at age 66 after fruitless work for 50 years. Finally Pope Urban IV established the feast a century after the start of the revelations.

Yet not always do such things happen. St. Catherine Labouré had early success with the Miraculous Medal.

(h) Has the recipient been fearful of deception, open to Superiors or Director, and never desired revelations? St. Teresa of Avila was told in a vision to found a reformed Carmelite house, but yet did nothing until she had consulted four advisors (Autobiography 32). Mary of Agreda is quite the opposite. St. Ignatius in his rules for first Week, 13, says Satan tries to keep the person from being open. St. Monica as St. Augustine reports desired revelations about his coming marriage; they were false (Confessions 6. 13). So if a revelation has been desired that alone makes it doubtful. This is especially so if answers of pure curiosity are desired or answers to scholastic questions. Mary of Agreda was imprudent here, and was encouraged in imprudence by her confessors.

(i) It is probably good to employ the testimony of expert psychologists as to ecstatic states etc. However, psychology is not so solid and exact a science that absolute trust should be placed in their results.

Further Points to be Checked

1. Do we have an entirely authentic text? Some things have been suppressed or corrected in some cases. There may also have been additions.

2. Is the teaching in full accord with the teachings of the Church and with the certain conclusions of history and of science? If free from all errors, this need not prove it is of divine origin. But also, since there can be mixtures in private revelations, one false teaching need not lead us to conclude that all points are false.

3. Is there a revelation of the vices and sins of others? This does not always prove a revelation is false, but calls for careful checking. Some Saints have had a knowledge of the secrets of hearts, which helped in reforming souls: St. Joseph of Cupertino, St. Catherine of Siena, St. John Vianney. St. John of the Cross, in Ascent II. 26 warns that Satan at times will make false revelations of the sins of others. Further, sometimes seeming knowledge is only the result of imagination.

4. Is the information useful for salvation of souls? If it is merely to satisfy curiosity it is unlikely to be of divine origin. Some seeming seers act like mediums, give information on births, marriages, legal processes, diseases, political events etc. God does not run an Inquiry Office. Some are very clever at observing and can work with little things. Séances often push furniture about and cause vibrations in musical instruments etc. God does not do these things. Also suspect are revelations that merely give truisms.

A large abundance of revelations taken alone does not disprove. We have cases like this in St. Bridget, St. Gertrude, St. Frances of Rome, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Margaret Mary, St. Ignatius and others.

5. Is all in accord with the dignity and gravity of the Divine Majesty? Some alleged revelations descend into vulgar speech. If there is neurotic exaltation and crowds weeping over their sins as at revivals, it is at least suspect. Satan at times appears taking repulsive shapes. On the other hand, St. Frances of Rome once saw 6 devils in the form of 6 beautiful doves--when she saw through it, they changed to crows and tried to harm her. Satan at times takes on the appearance of Christ Himself.

6. Are there sentiments or peace of disquiet? St. Ignatius considers this sign important. The good Spirit may cause momentary disquiet, but then brings peace. It is the opposite with satan. But the peace alone will not prove the words are divine.

7. Revelations to direct princes or clergy are suspect: Mary of Agreda kept up correspondence with Phillip IV of Spain for 20 years. The King divided his sheets of paper into two columns so she could comment in the opposite column. But the comments are mostly commonplace, with general advice anyone could have given. She had no comments on the King's relaxed morality and his culpable carelessness on things for which he was responsible.

Summary

We might sum up the characteristics thus:

1) Signs of the spirit of God: fits with teaching of Church; serious; gives light to the soul, docility, discretion: no hurriedness or exaggerations; humble thoughts; confidence in God, rightness of intention, patience in suffering, self-denial, sincerity and simplicity in conduct, no attachments not even to the gifts, great desire to imitate Christ in all things (a very strong sign), gentleness, kindness;

2) Signs of the evil spirit: (the opposite of the above--spirit of falseness or lie, suggestion of useless things, curious things, impertinent things, darkness, restlessness in the soul, a bold, obstinate spirit, many indiscretions, pride, lack of hope, disobedience, vanity, self-satisfaction, impatience, rebellion of the passions, hypocrisy, pretense, attachment to earthly things, forgetfulness of Christ and of imitating him, a false charity including bitter zeal, indiscretion.

Blessed GABRIEL M. ALLEGRA, O.F.M.

(1907-1976†)

Exegete - Theologian - Missionary

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CRITIQUE, NOTES, LETTERS

ON

MARIA VALTORTA 'S

POEM OF THE MAN - GOD

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— INTRODUCTION —

Rare it is to find a biblical scholar reading and enthusiastically re-reading the entire voluminous Poem, applying his own expertise to its study and evaluation. But surely rarest of to find today such a scholar whose cause for beatification had already been opened in 1984, just 8 years after his sudden death, and who was, on December 15, 1994, declared "Venerable" by Pope John Paul II for the heroism of his virtues [Acta Apostolicae Sedis: No. 8, 7 August 1995, pp.723-727]. Yet in the author of the four parts presented in this dossier, we happily have all of these rarities combined in one eminent scripture exegete, theologian and missionary: Father Gabriel M. Allegra, O.F.M.

Father Gabriel of the Friars Minor, a compatriot of Valtorta, was both a missionary to China and a biblical exegete. He is renowned for having started the first Biblical Institute in China and for translating the entire Bible into Chinese. His work as a scripture scholar had enjoyed the support and grateful recognition of successive popes from Pius XI to Paul VI. For some time he also resided in Hong Kong. There he became a friend and frequent visitor at the Cistercian Trappist monastery of Lantao in Hong Kong, where he preached a retreat and gave scripture conferences to the monks, one of whom described him as "a very humble man".

In 1965, a confrere, Father Margiotti, had introduced Father Gabriel to Valtorta's Poem of the Man-God, and thereafter he apparently became a dedicated and profound connoisseur of her Work. In a letter to a relative that same year he stated his desire to publish some formal presentation of this Work in response to those who had asked his opinion of it as a biblical scholar. After his sudden death in 1976, many posthumous notes discovered by the postulator of his cause revealed that he had apparently written such a presentation in the form of a critique, but never published it. Many other spontaneous and random notes of his on Valtorta's Poem were also found, from which he evidently composed his more formal presentation. Along with these were also personal letters to confreres and relatives containing comments on Valtorta's great Work.

On April 23rd, 2002, at the Vatican and in the presence of the Pope, the Decree was promulgated which concludes the Cause for the Beatification of Gabriel M. Allegra, O.F.M.: great Franciscan figure, missionary in China, translator of the Bible into Chinese, reader and admirer of the Work of Maria Valtorta.²

The chapter which we have reserved for him from pages 63 to 88 of the book *Pro e contro Maria Valtorta*³ ["*For and Against Maria Valtorta*"] relates biographical hints of this new "Blessed" and all that he wrote with regard to [Valtorta's] Work, about which he gave the following conclusive opinion: "Gifts of nature and mystical gifts harmoniously joined explain this masterwork of Italian religious literature, and perhaps I should say [a masterwork] of the world's Christian literature."

We hold that Father Allegra saw in the Work of Maria Valtorta a "masterwork" both for its literary form (which is explained with his words "gifts of nature", cultivated in study) and for its content (which is explained with his words "mystical gifts", acquired in ascesis), noting that the former and latter "gifts" are "harmoniously joined."

All of Father Gabriel's posthumous notes were subsequently published serially in several issues of Bollettino Valtortiano ["Valltorta Bulletin"]. It is from these serial publications that the translations in the accompanying dossier were made. They are presented here in four sequential parts:

Part I - "A Critique of Maria Valtorta's Poem of the Man-God"

Part II - "Notes for a Valtorta Critique"

Part III - "Valtortian Notes of Father Allegra"

Part IV - "Letters of the Servant of God: Father Gabriel Allegra, OFM"

Part No. I: "A Critique..." seems to be the formal Presentation of Valtorta's Poem which Father Gabriel drew up for eventual publication. Part No. II: "Notes for a...Critique", and Part No. III: "Valtortian Notes...", are random spontaneous notes he probably jotted down while reading the Poem and from which he composed his formal Presentation or Critique (No. I). Part No. IV: "Letters...", gives parts of letters written to his confreres and relatives which touch on Valtorta's Poem.

These four Parts, mature reflections of an eminent exegete and theologian, give a clear, forthright and categorical answer to that unfailling question raised by academia's rationalistic scientism so rampant in the Church today: "How would a modern scripture scholar judge The Poem of the Man-God?" They provide as well an adequate reply for western readers of the Poem often challenged with this dubious question. Nonetheless, for the a priori prejudiced, for the skeptical and incredulous of today's ecclesiastical academia, the Poem, with its feared threat to their whole hermeneutical value system is, and will sadly remain, a sealed Book: that "pearl of great price" hidden unawares in their chosen field. But then, it was not given to them. It was destined—as Father Gabriel says in his letters: "...For simple souls, for hearts that are evangelically children."

"Unless you turn and become as little children...."

—Translator

— I —

[BOLLETTINO VALTORTIANO: No. 6, September 1972, pp. 21-24:

— GABRIEL M. ALLEGRA, O.F.M. — Exegete - Theologian - Missionary

On January 14, 1984, at Hong Kong, in the presence of the diocesan Bishop, Msgr. John B. Wu, the process was opened for the canonization of Fr. Gabriel M. Allegra who had just died in Hong Kong, on January 26, 1976.

Father Allegra was born in 1907, at San Giovanni La Punta, in the province of Catania. At 16, he entered the Order of the Friars Minor, became a priest in 1930, and the following year departed for China, where he distinguished himself as an exemplary missionary and man of culture, founding a biblical Institute and accomplishing the first translation into Chinese of the whole Bible. His work had had the support and acknowledgment of successive popes from Pius XI to Paul VI.

We should note that Father Allegra was a profound connoisseur of the writings of Maria Valtorta, of whom he became a passionate reader in 1965, when he obtained her volumes from a confrere, Father Fortunato Margiotti. With the intention of illustrating The Poem of the Man-God for eventual translators, the renowned biblical scholar drew up at one stretch in 1970, at Macau, a presentation which occupies 11 closely typed pages. It is an analysis of the Writer, Maria Valtorta, and of her Work [The Poem...], and an exposition of the Work's vicissitudes and criticisms - a serene and conscious judgment as only a scholar who has the gift of humility could give. Father Allegra's presentation turns out to be so interesting that it was hard for us, even if necessary, to select the passages we report here.

— Emilio Pisani, Editor]

A CRITIQUE OF MARIA VALTORTA'S

" POEM OF THE MAN-GOD "

Gabriel M. Allegra, O. F. M.

The Poem contains, or rather is, a series of visions witnessed by the Writer [Valtorta] as if she were a contemporary of them. She therefore sees and hears whatever concerns the life of Jesus from the beginning of the Birth of Most Holy Mary, which occurred through a Heavenly grace in the old age of Anne and Joachim, up to the Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord--or rather, up to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into Heaven.

The Visionary-Hearer usually begins by describing the location of the scene which she contemplates; she reports the chatter of the crowd and of the disciples; and then, according to what she sees and hears, she describes the miracles, relates the Discourses of the Lord, or the dialogues of those present with Him or with the disciples, or the dialogues among themselves. This re-evoking of the life of Jesus, its times and surroundings, and in its various aspects: physical, political, social, familial, is done without any effort. The Writer reports what she has seen or heard. Her style does not resound with the erudition notable in the most famous lives of Jesus. It is rather the report of an eye and auricular witness. If Mary of Magdala or Joanna of Cusa had been able during their life to see what Maria Valtorta sees, and had written it down, I believe that their testimony would not differ much from that of the Poem. Valtorta observed with such intensity the place and personages of her visions that anyone who has been in the Holy Land for studies and has repeatedly read the Gospels, need make no excessive effort to reconstruct the scene.

That a novelist or a playwright of genius may create unforgettable characters is a known fact; but of the numerous novelists or playwrights who have approached the Gospel in order to use it in their creations, I do not know of one who has drawn from it such richness and sketched with such force and so pleasingly the figures of Peter, of John, Mary Magdalene, Lazarus, Judas--especially of Judas and his tragic and pitiful mother, Mary of Simon--and of so many, many others (and I omit for now Jesus and Mary), as does Valtorta with the greatest naturalness and without the least effort.

The Discourses

The most impressive thing, at least for me, are the Lord's Discourses. Naturally there are all those found in the Holy Gospels, but developed; as are also developed a good many themes which in the Gospel are barely sketched or hinted at. There are, moreover, many other Discourses reported of which nothing is said in the Gospel, but which the circumstances led Jesus to pronounce. These too are constructed as the former [i.e., as those found in the Gospel]. It is the same Lord who speaks, whether He adopts the style of the parable--the Poem contains some forty "agrapha" [i.e., "unwritten"] parables--or an exhortative or prophetic style, or finally, whether He employs the sapiential style in use among the rabbis of the New Testament epoch. Therefore, besides the great Discourses of the Gospels, like the one on the Mount, that of the Sending Out of the Apostles, the Eschatological Discourse, those of the last week and of the Last Supper, there are in the Poem many others, e.g., which explain the Decalogue, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, or which constitute special instructions to the men or women disciples, to an individual person, to mixed hearers of Jews and Gentiles.... Finally, there are the Discourses on the Kingdom of God or more clearly on the Church, which are held before the Passion as a colloquy by the Lord with His brother-cousin, James, on Carmel, and are then developed after the Resurrection while He was speaking to the Apostles and the disciples on Tabor and on another mountain of Galilee. The theme of these latter is indicated by St. Luke with the simple phrase: ...speaking of the Kingdom of God (cf. 9:11).

In briefly considering the matter treated in these Discourses, one finds in them all of the Christian Faith, Life and Hope. The tone and the style never belie themselves; they are always the same: lucid, strong, prophetic, at times full of majesty; at others, overflowing with tenderness. I will cite some examples.

We all know the anxiety of the greatest exegetes to situate and explain according to their living context, e.g., the colloquy with Nicodemus, the Discourse on the Bread of Life, the theological-polemical Discourses pronounced at Jerusalem: how many efforts made and how varied! In the Poem, however, their connection is spontaneous, natural, as if flowing logically from the circumstances.

The Events

What is said of the Discourses is valid for the miracles. In the Poem there are so many of them--which the Gospel subsumes under the phrases: and He cured and healed all. There are also some events which neither exegetes nor novelists nor the apocryphal writers have thought of. For example, the evangelization of Judea hinted at by St. John (Jn 1-4) at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus; the merciful apostolate of the Lord in favor of the Samaritans, of the poor, of the peasant-farmers of Doras and Giocana, of the inhabitants of the district of Ophel, the continuous journeys of the tireless Master through the territory of all the twelve ancient tribes, and the conspiracy plotted, by some in good faith, by most in bad faith, to proclaim Him king and thus to destroy Him more easily by Roman hands--a plot which John (Ch. 6) soberly hints at.

And how forget the heroic fidelity of the twelve Bethlehem shepherds and the double imprisonment of John the Baptist? and those converted by the convert, Zaccheus, and those persons whom Jesus saved even materially, like Syntica, Aurea Galla, Benjamin of Aenon? Or again, the last prophetic voices of the chosen People: Sabea of Bethlechi, the healed Samaritan leper, Saul of Keriot? Or how forget the relationship of Jesus with Gamaliel, with some of the members of the Sanhedrin, with a group of pagan women who gravitated around Claudia Procula, the wife of Pontius Pilate? Or the story and figure of Mary Magdalene, of the little boy, Marziam? or of the individual Apostles, each of whose character is indelibly impressed in

the heart of the attentive reader: especially the characters of Peter, John, and Judas and his pious and unfortunate mother?

The Palestinian World

And how much do we not learn about the political, religious, economic, social and familial situation of Palestine in the first age of our era, even from the discourses of the most humble--rather, especially from these--which the seeing and hearing Writer, Valtorta, reports! One might say that in this Work the Palestinian world of the time of Jesus comes back to life before our eyes; and the best and worst elements of the characters of the chosen People--a people of extremes and enslaved by every mediocrity--leaps alive before us.

Private Revelation

The Poem is presented to us as the completion of the four Gospels and a long explanation of them; Valtorta, the Writer, is the illustrator of the Gospel scenes. This explanation and completion is justified in part by the words of St. John: "Many other prodigies Jesus did before His disciples, which are not written in the present book..." (Jn 20:30); and: "Many other things Jesus did which, if they had to be written one by one, I think that the whole world could not contain the books to be written" (Jn 21:25). It is a completion and explanation which is justified, I repeat, only in part or in principle, since from the historical-theological point of view, Revelation was closed with the Apostles and all that is added to the revealed Deposit, even if it does not contradict it but happily completes it, could at most be the fruit of a particular individual charism which obliges to faith the one who receives it, as also those who believe it to be a question of a true charism or charisma--which in our case would be the charism of revelation, of vision, or of discourses of wisdom and discourses of knowledge (1 Cor 12:8; 2 Cor 12:1...).

In summary, the Church has no need of this Work to unfold Her salvific mission until the Second Coming of the Lord, as She had no need of the Apparitions of the Madonna at La Salette, at Lourdes, at Fatima.... But the Church can tacitly or publicly recognize that certain private revelations can be useful for the knowledge and practice of the Gospel and for understanding its mysteries, and hence, She can approve them in a negative form, that is, by declaring that the revelations are not contrary in word to the Faith. Or She can officially ignore them, leaving Her children full liberty to form their own judgment.

In this negative form the revelations of St. Bridget, of St. Matilda, St. Gertrude, Venerable Mary of Agreda, St. John Bosco and many other saints have been approved.

Comparison With Other Works

Whoever starts out to read [The Poem] with an honest mind and with commitment can well see for himself the immense distance that exists between The Poem and the New Testament Apocrypha, especially the Infancy Apocrypha and the Assumption Apocrypha. And he can also notice what distance there is between this Work and that of Venerable Catherine Emmerich, Mary of Agreda, etc. In the writings of these latter two visionaries, it is impossible not to sense the influence of third persons, an influence which it seems to me must on the contrary be absolutely excluded from our Poem. To be convinced of this it suffices to make a comparison between the vast and sure doctrine--theological, biblical, geographical, historical, topographical--which crowds every page of the Poem, and the same material in the [other visionary] works mentioned above. I am not going to speak of literary works, because there are none which cover the life of Jesus beginning from the Birth to the Assumption of the Madonna, or at least none known to me. But even if we limit ourselves to the basic plots of the most celebrated ones, like: Ben Hur, The Robe, The Great Fisherman, The Silver Chalice, The Spear..., these could not quite bear comparison with the natural, spontaneous plot welling up from the context of events and characters of so many persons--a veritable crowd!--which forms the mighty framework of the Poem.

I repeat: it is a world brought back to life, and the Writer rules it as if she possessed the genius of a Shakespeare or a Manzoni. But with the works of these two great men, how many studies, how many vigils, how many meditations are required! Maria Valtorta, on the contrary, even though possessing a brilliant intelligence, a tenacious and ready memory, did not even finish her secondary education; she was for years and years afflicted with various maladies and confined to her bed, had few books--all of which stood on two shelves of her bookcase--did not read any of the great commentaries on the Bible--which could have justified or explained her surprising scriptural culture--but just used the popular version of the Bible of Fr. Tintori, O.F.M. And yet she wrote the ten volumes of the Poem from 1943 to 1947, in four years!

Striking Details

We all know how much research scholars have done, especially Hebrew scholars, in designing various maps of the political geography of Palestine from the time of the Maccabees up to the insurrection of Bar Kokba. For more than twenty years they have had to consult a pile of documents: The Talmud, Flavius Josephus, Inscriptions, Folklore, ancient itineraries.... And yet, the identification of a good many localities still remains uncertain. In the Poem though--whatever could be the judgment given about its origin--there is no uncertainty. At least in 4/5ths of the cases, recent studies confirm the identifications supposed in [The Poem]; and the number would grow, I think, if some specialist would be willing to study this question deeply. Valtorta, for example, sees the forking of roads, landmarks which indicate directions, various cultivations according to the differing quality of the terrain, so many Roman bridges thrown across various rivers or streams, springs that are lively in certain seasons and dried up in others. She notes the difference in pronunciation between the various inhabitants of diverse

regions of Palestine, and a mass of other things which perplex the reader, or at least make him thoughtful.

There are a series of visions in which the mystery of the Birth of Jesus, His Agony, His Passion, and His Resurrection are described with Heavenly words and images, with an angelic eloquence; while on the other hand, so much light is thrown on the mystery of Judas, on the attempt to proclaim Jesus king, on His two brother-cousins who do not believe in Him, on the impression awakened in the Gentiles about Him, on His love of the lepers, the poor, the aged, children, the Samaritans, and especially on His love, so pleasingly ardent and delicate, for His Immaculate Mother.

And not only from the human point of view, but especially a theological one, who can remain indifferent reading the two chapters on the desolation of His most holy Mother after the tragedy of Calvary, which reveal to us how the Co-redemptrix had been tempted by Satan, and how Her Redeemer-Son had been tempted? The sublime theology of these two chapters may be compared to that of so many of the laments of the Sorrowful Mother.

Historical-Doctrinal Harmony

Exegetes today, even Catholics, take the strangest and most daring liberties over the historicity of the Gospel's Infancy accounts and the narratives of the Resurrection, as if with Form Criticism ["Formgeschichte"] and Redaction Criticism ["Redaktionsgeschichte Methode"] one finds the panacea for all difficulties--difficulties which were not unknown to the Fathers of the Church. Truly, to speak only of some recent exegetes: e.g., Fouard, Sepp, Fillion, Lagrange, Ricciotti..., on these difficult points they spoke their balanced and luminous words. But today there are other masters whom even our own follow with such confidence.... Well then, to come back to us: I invite the readers of the Poem to read the pages consecrated to the Resurrection, to the reconstruction of the events of the day of the Pasch, and they will ascertain how all is harmoniously bound together there--just as so many exegetes who follow the critical-historical-theological method have tried to do, but without fully succeeding. Such pages do not disturb, but gladden the heart of the faithful and strengthen their faith!

Language

But there is another surprise: this woman of the 20th Century who, though confined to a bed of pain became the fortunate contemporary and follower of Christ, heard the Apostles and Jesus talk in Italian, but in an Aramaicized Italian--except for certain moments carefully noted by her: when, that is, the Apostles and Jesus prayed in Hebrew or in Aramaic. Moreover, the Lord, the Madonna, the Apostles, even when treating of subjects dealt with in the New Testament, adopt the theological language of today, that is, the language initiated by the first great theologian, St. Paul, and enriched throughout so many centuries of reflection and meditation, and which has thus become precise, clear, irreplaceable.

There is in the Poem, therefore, a transposition, a translation of the Good News announced by Jesus into the tongue of His Church of today, a transposition willed by Him, since the Visionary was deprived of any technical theological formation. And this is, I think, in order to make us understand that the Gospel message announced today by His Church of today, and with today's language, is substantially identical with His Own preaching of twenty centuries ago.

The Valtorta Phenomenon

A book of great bulk, composed in exceptional circumstances and in a relatively very short time: here is one aspect of the Valtorta phenomenon.

The Writer confesses repeatedly that she is only a "mouthpiece," a "phonograph," one who writes what she sees and hears, while remaining "crucified on a bed". Hence, according to her, the Poem is not her own, it does not belong to her, it was revealed, shown to her. She does nothing else but describe what she has seen, report what she has heard, while also participating with all her heart of a woman and a devoted Christian in the visions. From this intimate participation of hers is born the antipathy she feels for Judas and, on the contrary, the intense affection she feels for John, for the Magdalene, for Syntica..., and I do not even speak of the Lord Jesus and of the most holy Madonna towards whom at times she pours out her heart and her love with words of passionate lyricism worthy of the greatest mystics of the Church.

In the Dialogues and Discourses which form the structure of the Work there is, in addition to an inimitable spontaneity (the Dialogues), something of the ancient and at times the hieratic (the Discourses). In sum, one hears a very good translation of an Aramaic or Hebraic manner of speaking, in a vigorous, multiform, robust Italian. It is again to be noted that in the structure of these Discourses, Jesus either moves in the wake of the great Prophets, or adapts Himself to the method of the great rabbis who explain the Old Testament by applying it to contemporary circumstances. Let us recall the Peshet ["Interpretation"] of Habakkuk found in Qumran and compare it (passing over the word itself) with the "peshet" which Jesus gives us of it.

We may also compare other explanations which the Lord gave for other passages of the Old Testament and for which we possess, in whole or in part, the commentaries of the rabbis of the 3rd or 4th Century B.C., but which obviously follow a traditional style of composition much more ancient and probably also contemporaneous with Jesus. Besides an external similarity of form, we will perceive such superiority of depth, of substance, that we will finally understand fully why the crowd said: "No one has spoken as this Man."

A Gift of the Lord

I hold that the Work [of Valtorta] demands a supernatural origin. I think that it is the product of one or more charisma and that it should be studied in the light of the doctrine of charisma, while also making use of the contributions of recent studies of psychology and related sciences which certainly could not have been known by old theologians like Torquemada, Lanspergius, Scaramelli, etc.

It is the property of charisma that they are bestowed by the Spirit of Jesus for the good of the Church, for the upbuilding of the Body of Christ; and I do not see how it can be reasonably denied that the Poem upbuilds and delights the children of the Church. Undoubtedly, charity is the most excellent way (1 Cor 13:1); it is also well known that some charisma which abounded in the primitive Church had become rarer later on. But it is equally certain that they have never been wholly extinct. The Church through the centuries must test if they derive from the Spirit of Jesus or are a disguise of the spirit of darkness masquerading as an angel of light: Try the spirits, if they are of God! (1 Jn 4:1)

Now, without anticipating the judgment of the Church which to this moment I accept with absolute submission, I allow myself to affirm that since the principal criterion for the discernment of spirits is the Word of the Lord: From their fruits you will know them..., (Mt 3:20), and with the good fruits which the Poem is producing in an ever growing number of readers, I think that it comes from the Spirit of God.

BOLLETTINO VALTORTIANO: No. 29, Jan-June 1984, pp. 114-116.

— GABRIEL M. ALLEGRA, O.F.M. — Exegete - Theologian - Missionary

With the intention of enticing and guiding translators, the renowned biblical scholar and missionary, Fr. Gabriel Allegra, O.F.M., in 1970, wrote a long and detailed presentation of the Work "The Poem of the Man-God" by Maria Valtorta, which we received in 11 closely typed pages and published, while omitting their historical characteristics, in our Bulletin No. 6.

An interesting new discovery has now been added to the contributions which Father Allegra, an exceptional reader, has offered to the Work of Maria Valtorta. Here is how Father Leonard Anastasius, Vice-postulator of the Friars Minor, speaks of these contributions in two recent letters which accompany the precious material:

"I am an assiduous reader of the Work of Maria Valtorta. In these days there has come under my eyes some handwritten pages found in the notebooks of Father Gabriel Allegra's diary, which speak of the previously mentioned Writer [Valtorta]. You know that Father Allegra was a great admirer and diffuser of Maria Valtorta's writings, so much so that he may be called a 'Valtortian'. I have the joy of communicating to you that last January 14th, at Hong Kong, the process for his beatification was opened. I am its Vice-Postulator; and having found among his writings some pages which concern Maria Valtorta, I have made photocopies of them to send them off to you. They will be very useful to you. The judgement of Father Allegra is very valid, since he had been a biblical scholar of world renown." (Letter of 2/3/84).

"I have learned with pleasure the news given me, that is, that in the next number of the Bollettino Valtortiano [Valtorta Bulletin] you will speak of our Father Allegra whose cause for beatification has already been introduced. Truly, he can be considered a 'Valtortian'. He was very enthusiastic about the 'Poem of the Man-God.' He spoke of it frequently in his various encounters. In letters from him which I am reading, I often find his exhortations to read the 'Poem'. It had been he who advised me to read it in 1970. And from then on until today I have never stopped reading it. This very day I have sent to you some other photocopied pages of the writings of Father Allegra in which he speaks in a marvelous way of Maria Valtorta." (Letter of 4/12/84).

The photocopied pages are handwritten, on [calendar] memorandum pages; some are dated at Macau in 1968, others in 1970, others again are without date. They are prior therefore, at least in part, to the organic treatise which Father Allegra drew up in 1970, as if these were the first notes made for that treatise. [See Part No. I above of this dossier. -Trans.]

His writing, done on the spur of the moment and at one stretch, could reveal his intention of trying to fix (in mind) right away some thought, some impression, some intuition. When it happened that the impulse of faith had to be compared to the reasons of science, a "doubt" blossoms which is tempered in a prayerful trust, making of the "critic" a man who prays even when he is immersed in study, in research. Father Allegra could teach scholars humility.

We have given a certain order to these scattered pages, the text of which we now set forth with a feeling of veneration that surpasses gratitude.

--Emilio Pisani, Editor]

– NOTES FOR A VALTORTIAN CRITIQUE –

Gabriel M. Allegra, O.F.M.

Maria Valtorta's Poem of the Man-God has been published as a novel, and I hope that with such a title it continues to be reprinted in the future, and often; but it is not a novel. It is the complement of the four Gospel traditions, and the explanation of them.

This explanation at times surprises us, it seems so new to us, so true and so energetic that we are quite ready to neglect it. It is a question of private revelation! And then, done by a woman! And we men, we priests, know well in this how to imitate the Apostles who called the vision that the women had of the Risen Christ: "the delirium of women" [Lk 24:11]. Certainly St. Paul, in his list of the witnesses of the Resurrection, excludes the women; but the Gospels instead give them a preponderant part. Yet all priests want to imitate St. Paul in this!

Now the Poem of the Man-God does not really deserve to be neglected with that self-assurance and aloofness which is characteristic of many modern theologians. In the Church there is the Spirit, and hence, there are the charisma of the Spirit. I myself think that only through a charism of the Holy Spirit, solely with His help, could a poor sick woman of limited biblical culture write, in the space of three years, 20,000 pages which when printed are the equivalent of 10 volumes. And what pages! I note also that certain of the Lord's Discourses of which the principal subjects are only hinted at in the Gospels, are developed in this Work with a naturalness, with a connection of thought so logical, so spontaneous, so inherent to the time, the place, the circumstances, as I have not found in the most famous exegetes. I would cite only the Discourse of the Lord with Nicodemus and that of the Bread of Life. But the exegetes, followers of the History of Forms [Form Criticism] will never [!] humble themselves to give one look at this Work where many problems are dissolved with marvelous facility, and where so many Discourses of which unfortunately only the theme now remains to us, are remade. In sum, I hold that this Work of Valtorta deserves at least that attention which theologians pay to the Mystical City of God of Venerable Agreda, to the revelations of Ann Catherine Emerich, and to those of St. Bridget. No one could make me believe that a poor, sick woman has written the Poem solely in virtue of her fervent religious feeling--all the more so since she did not see the various pictures or scenes from the life of the Lord in chronological order but rather, contrary to such order, scattered or confusingly re-presented to her throughout the space of three years.

What was this charism? What were its dimensions? How did the human instrument cooperate with it? What comes from the Spirit through the mind and the heart of a pious Christian woman, and what is the exclusive fruit of Valtorta's psyche? And on the hypothesis of supernatural visions, why did Jesus adopt the language of a 20th Century theology and not that of His own time? Had He wanted perhaps to teach us what is to be found in the Sacred Scriptures, and how they need to be expressed today? There are so many questions that deserve to be studied and meditated before reasonably explaining how the Poem of the Man-God never contradicts the Gospel, but admirably completes it, making it living and powerful, tender and demanding.

Having well determined the nature of the charism of the Spirit and the reality of His action in Maria Valtorta, what attitude ought the Christian to assume in reading these admirable evangelical pages?

It seems to me that the same practical conclusion imposes itself for whoever has read and studied the documents of the History of the Apparitions of Paray le Monial, Lourdes, Fatima, Syracuse....

And with the same degree of faith, and in the measure which the Lord Jesus and the Church desire it, I believe in it.

Acquaintances at the Crucifixion

Besides the pious women who assisted at the Crucifixion of the Lord on Calvary, of whom four are called by name and several others are left anonymous, St. Luke also speaks of certain "acquaintances" of Jesus: gnostoi, who assisted at His Death standing a little distance away. Who are such acquaintances? One could think of Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Manahem, Cusa (?), and other relatives of these personages of very high social condition.

Without posing the problem, Maria Valtorta in her Poem of the Man-God singles out these acquaintances in the group of the (12) Shepherds and some disciples. While the Condemned was tortured, and while He, the Tortured, remained in life, it was not permitted to the friends of the Guilty to come near, since they were men. Only to His Mother and to the pious women with her did the Centurion grant leave to draw near the Cross, and to John whom [the Centurion] believed to be the son of Mary and the brother of the Condemned.

The Death of Jesus and the Suffering of Mary

According to Valtorta (Poem of the Man-God), the chief physical causes which brought about the Death of Jesus were: 1) His bleeding before the Crucifixion which took place during the Agony of Gethsemani and the Scourging; 2) Pulmonary edema; 3) Fever; 4) Tetanus; 5) and most especially the spiritual suffering endured through the abandonment by His Father. During this unspeakable, incomprehensible trial of the Man-God, He felt in some way the separation from His Father as one

who is damned. Truly, He became sin personified. Him who knew no sin He made sin! For you have been bought at a great price! (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Cor 6:20)

During the Passion and Death of the Lord, His Sorrowful Mother fulfilled her office as the new co-redeeming Eve, accepting from her heart the Will of the Father, while compassionating her Son Jesus as only she could do, and forgiving and praying for us men, His crucifiers.

After Jesus died, Mary co-redeemed with her desolation up to the moment of His Resurrection. The Desolation of the Dolorous Mother comprised a direct personal attack by Lucifer, and then so many indirect assaults against her faith in the Resurrection, and--even for her--the abandonment by the Father.

In two long chapters, Valtorta describes what she saw and heard during the night of Good Friday, the day of the Sabbath, and the night of the Sabbath [Holy Saturday]. The little that I have read on the Sorrowful Mother on this subject remains in generalities; it cannot be compared to these powerful and very tender pages of Maria Valtorta. I cannot for anything convince myself that they are a simple meditation of a pious woman. No. This soul has seen and heard! The Finger of God is here!

Theological-Scriptural Justification

For a book so engaging and challenging, so charismatic, so extraordinary even from just a human point of view as is Maria Valtorta's Poem of the Man-God--for such a book I find the theological justification in the First Epistle to the Corinthians 14:6, where St. Paul writes: "If I come to you, brethren, speaking in tongues, how shall I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or doctrine?"

In this Work I find so many revelations which are not contrary to, but instead complete, the Gospel narrative. I find knowledge: and such knowledge in the theological (especially mariological), exegetical, and mystical fields, that if it is not infused I do not know how a poor, sick woman could acquire and master it, even if she was endowed with a signal intelligence. I find in her the charism of prophecy in the proper sense of a voice through which Valtorta exhorts, encourages and consoles in the name of God and, at rare times, elucidates the predictions of the Lord. I find in her doctrine: and doctrine such as is sure; it embraces almost all fields of revelation. Hence, it is multiple, immediate, luminous. Notwithstanding that at times some doubt about it may graze my mind, in thinking of the complexity of this doctrine I say to myself: I must think better of it; this opinion of the fortunate visionary is still possible.

My doubts revolve especially around what Valtorta says about Original Sin; about the call of the first Apostles, which seems to me in contradiction with the Gospel of St. John; about some points in the Discourse of Jesus on Tabor after the Resurrection and on the hill in the vicinity of Nazareth; about Jesus' reported affirmation of being God, the Son of God and the Messiah. What if such declarations on the part of the Lord were quite true, as Ebionism, born right in Palestine, explains them? and as does Gnosticism?

...

Literary, Exegetical, Theological Features

The Poem of the Man-God impresses me always more from the literary, exegetical, and theological point of view. As to the literary, there is no need to have recourse to preternatural gifts; the extraordinary intelligence and very acute sensitivity of Valtorta is enough to explain this Work. However, even on this point one need not forget that the Writer did not follow the chronological sequence of the life of Jesus, but that of the visions which Jesus showed her.

Concerning Valtorta's exegesis, there would be enough to write a book. Here I limit myself to reaffirming that I find no other works of eminent scripture scholars which, like Valtorta's Poem, complete and clarify the Canonical Gospels so naturally, so spontaneously, with such liveliness. In these latter there is continual talk of crowds, of miracles, and we have some outlines of the Discourses of the Lord. In the Poem of the Man-God, however, the crowds move, shout, are agitated; the miracles, you would say, are seen; the Discourses of the Lord, even the most difficult in their conciseness, become of solar clarity.

And what makes me marvel the more is that Valtorta never falls into theological error; on the contrary, she renders the mysteries revealed more easy for the reader, transposing them into a popular and modern language.

Certainly I am not convinced of the explanation of Original Sin, of the Calling of the first Apostles, of the identification of the Magdalene with Mary of Bethany--although on this point I have almost surrendered as an exegete--of the chronology of the life of Jesus...; but I cannot prove that the opinions followed by Valtorta in her Poem are erroneous. It could be that I am myself mistaken, and with me, many others. [!]

Whoever reads this Work after the articles and monographs of so many modern followers of Formgeschichte [Form Criticism] and Redaktionsgeschichte [Redaction Criticism], breathes at last the atmosphere of the Gospel, and almost becomes (he may also be one of the number--but always the more fortunate--of bultmanian exegetes), he almost becomes, I say, one of the crowd which follows the Master.

Gifts of nature and mystical gifts harmoniously joined together, explain this masterpiece of Italian religious literature, and perhaps I should say this masterpiece of literature of the Christian world.

The Figure of Mary

The figure, the virtues, the mission of the Madonna have been and are described by many of the holy, wise and devoted; and yet no one does it with the simplicity of Maria Valtorta in her Poem of the Man-God.

Valtorta has seen and heard; the others, for the most part, have only thought and meditated. But what surprises me the more is the sure vision of the gifts of Mary most holy.

The Apostles had to know the fullness of Revelation..., a fullness which the Church reached in a continual progression under the action of the Holy Spirit.

The dogmas which the Church goes on defending in the course of centuries --especially the Marian dogmas--are a solemn affirmation of the faith of the Apostles. Valtorta has been plunged again into the tender, moving, spontaneous faith of the Apostles, especially of St. John.

Reply to a Critic

Civiltà Cattolica 1961 (I do not remember the number of the Periodical) gave a judgment negative as ever on the Poem of the Man-God. For the critic of this eminent Review, Valtorta is a deluded dreamer, and her Work is "pseudo-religious," not immune from a subtle sensualism, because a swarm of women accompany Jesus. Besides, it is anti-historical because of the length of the Discourses of the Master which openly contrast with the strong conciseness of the Gospel Discourses.

It seems however that with the passing of the years, so severe a judgment as this should be blunted.

In three announcements given on Vatican Radio, Fr. Virginio Rotondi is completely favorable to the Poem. And justifiably, I think. To make of Maria Valtorta a "deluded dreamer" seems to me unjust. I know of no other deluded people or hysterics who have spoken thus of Jesus. Does the critic of Civiltà Cattolica know any?

The word "deluded" with which Maria Valtorta is rewarded by this critic of Civiltà Cattolica is equivalent to "hysteric". Now if there is any sickness to be excluded from the Valtortian phenomenon, it is precisely hysteria. It is known that the visions which comprise the life of the Lord do not follow a historical or chronological order. The chronological sequence is the work of the redactor or redactors who, even in this, followed the order indicated by the Revealer: the Lord. It is also known that at times the visionary expected one vision, and instead, another was granted her. It is known, finally, that in establishing a comparison between the writings of hysterics and those of Valtorta, and by availing oneself also of graphological examination, the phenomenon of hysteria in Maria Valtorta is to be absolutely excluded. Not that it is easy to explain Valtorta's visions, but certainly there is no question of the illusions of a hysteric.

The critic of C. Cattolica sees a "subtle sensualism" suffused in the Poem of the Man-God because, according to this Work, Jesus is followed by a swarm of women. This fact cannot be denied, but there are other facts which the critic does not recall, and that is that Jesus is also followed by a swarm of children, of male disciples, of old men, of friends, the poor, sinners, the sick, and of pagans. But then what does the illustrious critic mean by "subtle sensualism"? This expression seems to me in obvious contrast with all those holy, loving thoughts, those sweet and pleasing sentiments which this Work awakes in the heart of readers.

The Mercy of the Lord in the Poem is never separated from the demands of the Divine Justice, as also all the revelations--which He makes--not only do not contradict the Gospel, but harmonize perfectly with the economy of the Faith in which those saved should live, and which constitutes the framework of the whole Bible and especially of the New Testament. Therefore I cannot accept the accusation of "subtle sensualism" made toward this Work.

Jesus appears there as the Friend: the one and only Friend, I would say, of man; but always as Son of the "Father of immense majesty", of the "Just Father", of the "Holy Father", of the Father of Mercy.

Perhaps at first reading the case of Mary Magdalene could seem an exception. But when the pages consecrated to this seraphic soul are reread attentively, it can be ascertained that the exception does not exist.

The Poem, when completed, makes us better understand the Gospel, but it does not contradict it. I still do not know how to explain to myself, and perhaps I will never know, how the Lord had ever shown His earthly life to a soul of the 20th Century, but I believe in the Love which can do all. And I think also that this Omnipotent Love never asked such a sacrifice of a poor, sick woman for herself alone, but asked it for all the faithful, at least for those who believe in the charisma diffused in His Church by the Spirit, the Head of Christ.

The critic of Civiltà Cattolica also affirms that the Poem of the Man-God is not a source of the true religion because it is

crammed with "pseudo-religiosity". Certainly the Poem does not, cannot, substitute for the New Testament and the living Magisterium of the Church. But it is nevertheless a book full of biblical thought and instruction of the Catholic Church. The term "pseudo-religiosity" is calumnious.

There is no pseudo-religiosity in the works of St. Gertrude, St. Teresa, in the Meditations on the Life of Christ of Fr. John of Calvoli, in the mystical City of God of Ven. Mary of Agreda, in the writings of St. Charles of Sezze.... And likewise, I do not find it either in the Poem. Rather, I find in it a living and complete exposition of almost all Catholic doctrine and morality. But what makes me love it more is that the Poem itself pushes the reader to read the Bible with love and humility, and to listen with love and humility to the teaching of Holy Mother Church.

The Discourses of the Lord

In the Poem of the Man-God the Discourses of Jesus are exceedingly long, and contrast with the sapiential brevity of those preserved for us in the Gospels; this is another point that the critic of *Civiltà Cattolica* makes on this Work.

But the judgment of the distinguished Review seems to me unfounded. The Gospels report the Discourses of the Lord not in their entirety, but in their substance; at times they only give the subject matter. All the Words of the Lord reported in the four Gospels can be conveniently recited in less than six hours. Now it is unthinkable that the Divine Master, following in the wake of the Prophets and even of His contemporary Rabbis, had not spoken at greater length as regards the manner of structuring His Discourses. What St. John says at the end of his Gospel ("the whole world could not contain the books to be written!" --Jn 21:25), is valid not only for the actions of the Lord, but also for His Words.

The Gospel for Today

Certainly in the time of His mortal life, Jesus did not speak with those theological terms that came later, nor perhaps did He develop the Heavenly richness of His Word as appears in the Poem of the Man-God, that is, as He made His beloved Maria Valtorta see and hear It.

How is this fact explained? I answer thus: After twenty centuries, Jesus repeats and explains His Gospel by availing Himself of all the theological terminology of His Church, so as to tell us that Her teaching is already found implicitly in His Gospel--M. Pouget would have said: equivalently--and that this teaching is none other than the authoritative and infallible explanation which She gives and She alone can give, because guided and illumined by the Holy Spirit.

As to what concerns these truths, e.g., the Most Holy Eucharist, the dignity and mission of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Jesus already spoke during His life more clearly than the Church has done for centuries, so that the dogmatic progress for these and other truths is a return to the fullness of their Source.

Varied Reactions to the Poem

Finally, I observe that the Work of Valtorta is indirectly a proof of the historicity of the Gospels: they are, yes, a catechism, a kerigma [proclamation], but based upon the martyria [testimony] of witnesses chosen and approved by God. Quite different than *Formgeschichte* [Form Criticism]!

The effectiveness of the Word of God is conditioned by the quality of the terrain in which it falls. Man has the dreadful gift of liberty through which he can say "No" even to God!

Keeping in mind the parable of the sower, the liberty of man, and my own persuasion that the Poem of the Man-God is the Work of Jesus first and of Maria Valtorta next, the reaction of readers before this Work is expressed thus:

The Work of the Poem meets: distracted readers, honest readers, pious readers, critical and hypocritical readers....

The theologian and exegete should be at the same time among both the honest and the critical readers.

Discourses on the Decalogue for Today

The Discourses of Jesus in the plain at "Clear Water" [M. Valtorta, *The Poem of the Man-God*, II] are the explanation of the Decalogue. Through them and according to His purpose manifested always more often, Jesus intended to bring the Law back to its pristine fullness, freeing it from human superfluities. These Discourses do not follow the order of the Commandments, but respond to particular needs of some of the persons present, needs known to the Lord alone, inasmuch as He is not only the Son of Man, but also the Son of God.

This intimate contact with souls, be they in sin or desirous of salvation, whether men or women, spouses betrayed or mothers tortured by the conduct of their sons, give to the Words of the Lord a living, present, throbbing tone even today.

In the dismal plain of "Clear Water" between Jericho and Ephraim, in the gloomy days of November and December at the close of the first year of His public life, the Lord did His first great sowing: He sowed the Word which does not pass away

and does not die.

To what point are the Words of the Lord reported by Maria Valtorta authentic? Well: I have not succeeded in persuading myself that the visionary has invented or added her own. No. She reproduces what she hears and as she hears it.

But on the other hand, no one could deny that there is a translation of the Word of the Lord into the language of the Church of today, that is, into the rich and multiform language of our Theology, just as it was formed through and after so many centuries of polemics, discussions and preaching.

Who has done this transposing which is, then, twofold, inasmuch as from 1943 to 1947, Jesus spoke in Italian, while in the years of His mortal life on this earth He spoke in Aramaic, in Greek, and perhaps sometimes in Latin? And above all since in speaking to Valtorta He adopted our modern theological language? It can only be Jesus Himself. And He did so, I think, either to make us see that the teaching of His Church is nothing but the declaration of His own Words, or to engrave His Gospel in the heart of our contemporaries.

As the Discourses at "Clear Water" explain the Law, so the Discourse on the Mountain constitutes a step forward: it is the perfection of the Law, whether by referring to the intention of the Supreme Divine Lawgiver, or by meditating on it in the light of the Incarnation and imminent Redemption.

This double series of Discourses is completed by the Conversations of Jesus with the Apostles, by His polemics in the Temple and at Jerusalem or on the roads of Palestine, and finally, by His gracious, Heavenly confidences with the Apostles, the men and women Disciples, and especially with His Most Holy Mother.... What a work, this Poem! No, it is not a poor human work. There is in it the Finger of God.

Some Surprises and Doubts

In the Poem of the Man-God, Mammon is often equivalent to Satan; it is another name for Satan. Now I find that even Theodore Zahn, in his commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew has, for philological reasons, arrived at the same conclusion.

The Poem reserves for us many such surprises--which confirms the fact that we have before us, not the reveries of a sick woman, but rather the affidavit of a witness: only a witness, certainly, but one so worthy of faith.

This sick woman, with only the natural gift of a facile pen, though one cultivated also by studies of medieval literature, in less than four years writes a Work of 10 volumes in which she brings to life again the religious, political and cultural ambient of the first century, and what frightens the specialists themselves all the more, she recounts in proper order--but this order is recognized and established after the visions have ceased--she recounts in proper order the life of Christ, completing the Gospels without ever contradicting them.

At times, it is true, some doubt has remained, and still remains, about the manner of explaining, evolving and supplementing the Gospel account; but it is always a matter of exegetical questions or knotty problems which are presented with different interpretations.

After the Gospels, I do not know of another life of Jesus which can be compared with the Poem, just as I do not know any other lives of St. Peter or St. John which make the characters of the two holy Apostles so living. I cite these two because there is something about them in the Scriptures, while of the other Apostles we have almost only the names. Now, all the characters are always so well delineated and so consistent with themselves, that we find ourselves before a dilemma: either the Writer is a genius of Shakespearean or Manzonian stamp, or she has actually seen.

I opt for--rather I am compelled to choose--the second horn of the dilemma.

Mariology

As to the Mariology of this Work, I know of no other books which possess a Mariology so fascinating and convincing, so firm and so simple, so modern and at the same time so ancient, even while being open to its future advances.

On this point the Poem even, or rather above all, enriches our knowledge of the Madonna and irresistibly also our poor love, our languid devotion for Her.

In treating the mystery of the Compassion of Mary, it seems to me that Valtorta, by her breadth, depth and psychological sounding of the Heart of the Virgin, surpasses even St. Bonaventure and St. Bernardine. Could she do so without having supernaturally seen and heard?

The Autobiography

The Autobiography of Maria Valtorta departs from other similar works, even if written by saints. It is powerful and original

to the point of making me think often of that of B. Cellini from its style: robust, lively and spontaneous.

It is moreover a dramatic book, because the drama stands out in the nature of things and facts: the drama is born, I would say, from the character of Valtorta's mother who, unfortunately, had little or nothing of the heart of a wife or mother. The description, so lively, of this egotistical woman weighs on the reader and makes him read with pain these pages of her daughter, of that daughter who becomes the "voice" of Jesus and who writes *The Poem of the Man-God*. What a difference of character between mother and daughter! And what sort of heroism, and how much, in Maria. What a trial, what crosses, what martyrdom of the heart!

The Valtorta family is completely opposite to that of St. Francis. In the latter, the father, Peter of Bernardone, does not understand his son, who instead was always understood by his mother, the gracious madonna Pica. In the Valtorta family, however, the father loves and understands his daughter, whom her mother does not understand at all and makes her always suffer.

The heart of this woman is still more gloomy than that of the Princefather of the nun of Monza, and one is left so grieved by it in reading these pages because they have been written--naturally in obedience--always by her daughter.

The style is vigorous and very lively, copious and so colorful that it perhaps surpasses that of the *Poem of the Man-God* itself. These are pages rich with thought and psychological soundings which help us to understand the spiritual physiognomy of the mouthpiece of Jesus: Maria Valtorta.

[BOLLETTINO VALTORTIANO: No. 30, July-Dec., 1984, p.118

— GABRIEL M. ALLEGRA, O.F.M. — Exegete - Theologian - Missionary

We continue the publication of Valtortian Notes by Father Gabriel Allegra, begun in the preceding No. 29 [See No. II above of this dossier]. On the legibility and transposition of the text (it appears to be written at one stretch on pages of a Calendar Memorandum), the annotations set forth by us in the preceding installment are valid.)

We thank the Postulator General of the Friars Minor who continues to send us photocopies of the handwritten notes of the Servant of God on the Work of Maria Valtorta.

— Emilio Pisani, Editor]

— VALTORTIAN NOTES OF FATHER ALLEGRA —

January 8, 1970:

I am pleased to see the *Poem of the Man-God* translated into other tongues, because I am certain that through reading it many will grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus. I entrust this desire of mine to St. Clare and to M. Lucia Mangano.

Some "holy deaths" described or hinted at in the *Poem*: the death of St. Joseph; of Alpheus, husband of Mary the aunt of Jesus; of Saul of Keriot; of Jonah the ex-shepherd; St. John the Baptist; Lazarus; Abraham of Engaddi; John of Endor; the Good Thief; St. Stephen....

Come, Lord Jesus!

In her tragic destiny, a powerful and moving figure in the *Poem* is the mother of Judas, Mary of Simon, so loved by Jesus. No poet or dramatist has ever thought up a profile so robust, so delicate and at the same time so piteous, of that unfortunate and gracious woman.

January 9, 1970:

The great Discourses of Jesus in the *Poem of the Man-God* are framed in the ambient and circumstances which show them to us as being more spontaneous and more natural.

The Discourses at "Clear Water" are like the true, authentic explanation of the Decalogue; the Discourse on the Mountain is the magna carta of the Kingdom of Heaven. The parables [are] scattered throughout the book and always anchored to some circumstance which has given them birth and helps to understand them in depth; the great Discourses at Jerusalem, and the continuous instructions given to the Apostles, to the men and women Disciples, make of the *Poem* a coffer of Heavenly treasures.

Noteworthy is the manner in which Jesus explains the Old Testament, applying it always to the present, to the messianic era already in progress and which is being accomplished.

Also the discourses of the Apostles, especially those of Peter and John, are as an echo of the thought of Jesus.... I do not believe it is wise or just to remain indifferent before such treasures.

January 10, 1970:

A moving memory: the names of some children-friends of Jesus according to the Poem of the Man-God. Jesus was attracted to and attracted children, and therefore it is impossible to weave together a list of these dear little friends of His. Nonetheless, some are especially worth recalling for reasons explained in the Poem. They are, at Capharnaum: little Benjamin; Joanna and her small brother, little Toby; little James who brought the Lord Matthew's purse... At Magdala: little Benjamin. At Corazim: Joseph, the little carpenter; and then: Mary and her little brother, Matthias, adopted by Joanna of Cusa; and above all: Marziam, the orphan-child-symbol, adopted by Peter.

Unless you become as children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 18:2).

Macau, January 11, 1970:

The instructions which the Lord gives in the Poem, although impregnated with the thoughts and the culture of that time, are at the same time accommodated to the teaching of the Catholic Church of our times.

Even admitting that Jesus, the Word Incarnate, had been able to speak thus, I prefer to think that He had repeated His Gospel to Maria Valtorta in this guise, that is, modernizing it, in order to teach us that the present doctrine of the Church constitutes His same perennial teaching. Here is the reason, I think, why the Lord gives [instruction on] the Christian tri-name: Faith, Hope, Charity; and on the constitution of the Church, however embryonic, on Her Sacraments, and especially on Mariology, Celibacy, and on the Sacrifice of the New Covenant.... these teachings which are so living and current.

A practical consequence: I am a son of the Church! I am in the Bark of Peter! Come, Lord Jesus!

Macau, January 12, 1970:

The instructions which, according to the Poem of the Man-God, Jesus gave to his cousin, James, on the summit of Carmel, are completed by the Savior in the Discourse which He holds on Tabor after the Resurrection. A Discourse or Discourses to which justly belongs the title: Speaking of the Kingdom of God [cf. Acts 1:3]. Or: A Sermon on the Kingdom of God.

The Lord limits Himself to the essential lines of His program and leaves it to the Holy Spirit to guide, illumine and fortify His Church through the ages and according to Her needs.

Whoever is in the true Church of the Lord is nourished by the Word of Jesus, illumined by His Light, moved and nourished by His Spirit.

What glory and what joy to be able to say: "I am a son of the Church!"

Macau, January 14, 1970:

The Discourse of the Lord to the Disciples on the spiritual and corporal works of mercy is a complement of the Discourse on the Mountain. That is, according to the Poem of the Man-God, the Discourse on the Mountain insists especially on the duties of the son towards the Father in the New Kingdom, while the Discourse to the Disciples insists rather on the duties of brothers toward their brothers.

Both Discourses make us feel profoundly and sweetly that the Kingdom of Heaven is one family: the Family of God. To live in this Family, in this House as sons, to love and to be loved because we are sons--this is the sublime vocation of the Christian, of one who through faith in Jesus is born of God. "But to as many as received Him, He gave them power to become sons of God...they are born of God!" (Jn 1:12, 13)

Macau, January 16, 1970:

In citing and in disputing on the Scriptures, Jesus, in the Poem of the Man-God, adapts Himself to the Italian version [of the Scriptures], even when this diverges from the original. There must be a reason here. I think it is as follows:

The divergences always revolve around secondary points. Practically no version is very faithful to the original, but we have only some versions approved by Holy Mother Church because they are substantially faithful. Now the Lord approves of this way of acting in His Church, and hence cites or disputes by making use of a version approved by the Church (that of Fr. E. Tintori), the one which Maria Valtorta adopted. Would that the "difficult doctors" might use the Holy Scriptures with the

intention with which Valtorta used them!

Jesus' way of acting confirms once again how great is the authority of the Church. St. Joan of Arc said that between the Lord and the Church there is no difference.... What to say of today's dissenters [contestatori]?

March 10, 1970:

In the New Testament there are brief hints of the apostolate of Jesus in Samaria; however those few hints contain so many things which are fully revealed in the Poem of the Man-God. Consequently, the success of the Evangelization of Samaria spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles [8:25] seems evident to me. Or at least I'll say this, that the Poem makes it more natural for me and like an expected event, given the ministry of Jesus, His Mercy, His miracles among those poor "separated brethren".

I add that--apart from the Gospel--the most beautiful parables among so many "agrapha" [unwritten], are those which the Lord pronounced in Samaria.

The reaction of the Samaritans to the Lord's message was in general more sincere than that of the Jews who, through the envy and spite of those of the Temple, refused to welcome the promised and expected Savior.

June 18, 1970 - St. Ephrem:

In the Poem of the Man-God there are three figures of seers--for the moment I do not recall the others--in whose mouths the Lord puts His own Word which is an explanation of the true mission of the Messiah and the true nature of His Kingdom.

The first is Saul of Keriot, who died on the breast of Jesus; the second is the Samaritan leper, healed together with the other nine; the third is Sabea of Beth-lechi.

The discourse of Sabea is longer, more complete, more ardent.

Against these authentic seers who related the Words of God, are opposed the discourses of some who are Satanically possessed: full of spite, blasphemy, envy. So, for example, that of Judas Iscariot when he was surprised while robbing the strongbox of Joanna of Cusa; and then, some other discourses of Elchia, of Caiaphas, of Doras.... ---The struggle between darkness and Light; the testimony given to the Light, and the testimony given to the darkness.

Since I have read and re-read the Poem of the Man-God of Maria Valtorta, I have no taste any more for biblical-gospel novels. Nonetheless, between yesterday and today I have read The Centurion of L. Whitbuley, a short story, which perhaps would have gripped me before knowing the Poem of Valtorta, but which now has only interested me for its pure and concise style, and for the good knowledge which the author possesses of Palestinian customs in the time of Jesus.

I do not like many of the "predicaments" in the plot of this [Whitbuley] novel, especially the presentation of Judas and the description of his betrayal. But since I am convinced that M. Valtorta "has seen" in a way that I have still not succeeded in explaining completely to myself, while Witbuley, like Lloyd Douglas, and others...have only rethought, as more or less great artists, the pages of the Gospel, I am not allowed to be so demanding. No one asks of apocryphal writings what only the Gospels can give us.

BOLLETTINO VALTORTIANO: No. 31, Jan.-June, 1985, p.122

— GABRIEL M. ALLEGRA, O.F.M. — Exegete - Theologian - Missionary

Father Gabriel Allegra, missionary and biblical exegete of world renown (he translated the whole Bible into Chinese), of the Order of Friars Minor, was born at San Giovanni La Punta (Catania) in 1907, and died at Hong Kong in 1976. On the 14th of January, 1984, in the diocese of Hong Kong, the process for his beatification was opened. [As noted in the Introduction above, Pope John Paul II declared Fr. Allegra "Venerable" on December 15, 1994. --Trans.] We have already published the "Critique" and the "Valtortian Notes" of Fr. Allegra in Nos. 6, 29 and 30 of our Bulletin. [cf. Nos. I, II, and III above of this dossier.]

Through the kind agency of the Postulator General of the Friars Minor, we here publish some excerpts of letters of the Servant of God to his confreres and relatives which refer to Valtorta's Poem of the Man-God.

— Emilio Pisani, Editor

LETTERS OF THE SERVANT OF GOD:

FR. GABRIEL ALLEGRA, O.F.M.

FROM: Hong Kong, July 30, 1965 TO: Fr. Fortunato Margiotti in Rome

[This letter is probably Fr. Gabriel's initial reaction to his first acquaintance with Valtorta's Poem to which his confrere, Fr. Margiotti, had introduced him. — Trans.]

Dearest Fortunato,

I would like for a single instant to find myself in Rome to take you by your ears and pull them very, very hard, as when the bells once used to be loosed on Holy Saturday morning! But do you know that the Poem of Jesus [sic] has detached me from my studies of Holy Scripture? And it makes me weep and laugh with joy and love. But I will not go on! I do not believe that genius could thus complete the Gospel narration: the Finger of God is here! Quite different from Formgeschichte! [Form Criticism Method] I sense in this book the Gospel, or better, the intoxicating perfume of the Gospel. And I am proud that so many--not all--so many hypotheses correspond to those which I had worked out in my queer head in order to coordinate the life of the Savior. But of that I could speak only by word of mouth. This book is for me an act of Divine Mercy for the Church, for simple souls, for hearts which are evangelically children. I hope that the diligent editor will add in the last volume a fine index, at least for the proper names.

And now, dear Fr. Margiotti, since it [The Poem] is making me commit this sin of negligence toward my true duty, and since--which is worse--I have all the will to commit it entirely: be on the lookout and send me all the other volumes. And if you should find some biographical sketch of Maria Valtorta, send it to me also, because to know the witness means so much. And Norbert will pay for it; he pays for so many of my other whims, he will in outrage pay for the Poem of the Man-God !

I end now, because I want to return to the 4th volume of it...; it is irresistible: the Blessed Master--and what will it be when we see Him?

If I am not converted this time, I see it well: I am worse than Judas!...

Fr. Gabriel M. Allegra

FROM: Hong Kong, May 24, 1969 TO: (the same) Fr. Margiotti

Dearest Fr. Margiotti,

...And now I thank you for the Autobiography of Maria Valtorta, which absolutely occupies a place apart among all the autobiographies of men and women saints which I have read; like that of B. Cellini, it stands out among all other similar works of our literature.

It is painful to read what it says of her mother, and yet it seems to me that it was this intimate, continuous, torturing martyrdom which prepared Maria Valtorta for the sublime gifts of the visions and contemplations which she later received; in sum, it was this that had prepared her to be the mouthpiece of the Lord Jesus.

The language seems to me more varied and vigorous than that of the Poem of the Man-God, which also is so fresh and lively.

To sum up, dear Fr. Margiotti, I believe that you are an instrument of the Lord to make this soul known and its message--oh! a message so ample: ample as the Gospel!

I hope that the editors continue to publish all the works of this soul, virile in her humility, a soul which often makes one think of St. Catherine of Siena.

... Again, dear Fr. Margiotti, I say good-bye and pray you to stay on the lookout if ever the editor, Pisani, should print some other work of Valtorta!!!

Yours most affectionately in Christ
Fr. Gabriel M. Allegra, ofm

FROM: Hong Kong, August 5, 1965 TO: His uncle Joachim, Vicar in San Giovanni La Punta (Catania)

Dearest Uncle,

. . . This morning I have finished reading the 8th volume of Maria Valtorta's The Poem of the Man-God, and I confess to you that, notwithstanding the question marks that at times arise spontaneously in my mind as a theologian and an exegete--certainly from fatigue, but I should also tell the truth--this Work has profoundly moved me. It is certain to produce in all at least this: a more lively desire to meditate on the Gospel and to make love grow for the Word of God become a Book, as Origen said.

Since several have asked me what I think of this Poem, I am considering printing in some review--perhaps The Crusade of the Gospel--a presentation.

If Holy Mother Church should have to disavow this book because it is a question of private revelations, no one will be more glad to obey than I. But if, as I think, the Church will allow it to circulate through the hands of the faithful, like the revelations of Ann Catherine Emmerich or Ven. Mary of Agreda, I think that it will do an immense good.

Two volumes are still lacking: the history of the Passion and of the Resurrection. The language, more than being dignified, is fascinating; and when the Madonna is spoken of, there is a sweetness and a true Heavenly enchantment. . . .

Your most affectionate nephew Fr. Gabriel Maria

FROM: Hong Kong, August 29, 1965 TO: Fr. Mario Crocco, Vicar in Castellammare di Stabia (Napoli)

Dearest Mario,

. . . I end, dear Mario, by recommending to you the reading of the voluminous but fascinating Poem of the Man-God of Maria Valtorta: Fr. Margiotti has procured it for me and Fr. Pieraccini bought it for the Library. I assure you that this work brings one near the Lord and stimulates us strongly to meditate on the Gospel: I would like to say so many other things about it, but I do not want to with paper and ink, at least for now. I embrace you fraternally.

Your most devoted in Christ Fr. Gabriel Maria Allegra, ofm

FROM: Jerusalem, April 4, 1974 TO: Fr. Leonardo Anastasi in Acireale (Catania)

Reverend and Very Dear Fr. Guardiano, [read: Leonardo?]

. . . There is in the community a dear Father Missionary of Japan who has translated into Spanish all 10 volumes of the Poem of the Man-God and what is more, he is a biblical scholar who is studying scientifically the geography of the Work. Almost every day we speak of this Work, for which he lives, and it seems to me that the Spanish translation, given the number who speak this tongue--more than a one hundred-million--ought to do a great good for a great number of souls. And since I am habituated to dreaming, I think that if there could be a version in English, another in Russian and another in Arabic, and finally one in Chinese..., it would be a great victory against Satan...

Your most devoted Fr. Gabriel M. Allegra

FROM: Jerusalem, Monday of Holy Week, 1974 TO: His cousin Leonie Morabito, Poor Clare Sister in Caltanissetta

My beloved Sr. Leonie,

. . . I would like to write to you, as you desire, so many things on O.L. [= Our Lord] seen by one who lives in your land, but time is lacking to me; either retreats or confessions seriously bind me. . . . But I assure you that the Poem of the Man-God immensely surpasses any descriptions--I do not say of mine, because I do not know how to write--but of any other writer.

I rejoice so much in perceiving that this Work is loved by the Poor Lady of Caltanissetta, and especially by my dearly beloved sister, Sr. Leonie. Pray to the Madonna that there be success in translating it into English, Russian and Chinese. The Spanish version is already finished.... It is a Work that makes one grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus and His Holy Mother.

I embrace you with so much fraternal affection, and I bless you all.

Most affectionately

Fr. Gabriel M. Allegra

FATHER BERTI'S TESTIMONY ON MARIA VALTORTA'S "THE POEM OF THE MAN-GOD"

[*Father Carrado (Conrad) Berti, OSM (1911-1980), professor of Dogmatic and Sacramental Theology at the Pontifical "Marianum" Theological Faculty in Rome from 1939 onward, and secretary of that Faculty from 1950 to 1959, as well as consultant to some of the Fathers at the 2nd Vatican Council, was asked to oversee the editing and publication of the critical 2nd Italian edition of Valtorta's The Poem of the Man-God. He provided the extensive theological and biblical notes that accompany that edition, which is the basis of all current translations into English and other languages. Speaking in the 3rd person, he testifies to the history of The Poem and Valtorta's other mystical writings -- Trans.]*

[*N.B.: Some first names and titles, have been deleted, to avoid repetition, otherwise this is a faithful copy of Father Berti's 1978 testimony - Ed.]*

Biographical Hints

Biographical hints about Maria Valtorta are sufficiently evident... Whoever wants to know more about her should read the *Autobiography*, written by Maria Valtorta... (Also) one could read the accurate little volume, *Maria Valtorta, the Person and her Writings*, composed and published by Doctor Emilio Pisani, in 1976. (See also "The Person and Works of Maria Valtorta", by Emilio Pisani, at the beginning of Volume 1 of "The Poem" - Ed.)

2. The Order of the Servites of Mary

In 1944 and 1946, the infirm Maria Valtorta, by means of spiritual documents, and later by legal documents, entrusted her writings to the Order of the Servites of Mary, of which she was a Tertiary, so they might preserve them, have them printed, and diffuse them with the approval and blessing of the Church, to which she was very attached.

The Order of the Servites of Mary occupied itself with such writings above all through three of its priests: Rev. Romualdo M. Migliorini, who was for four years the spiritual director of the infirm Valtorta, and who typed out her writings; Rev. Corrado (Conrad) Berti, who provided them with theological notes; and Rev. Gabriel M. Roschini, who wrote a volume entitled: *The Virgin Mary in the Writings of Maria Valtorta*, preceded by an interesting introduction on the phenomenon. Both these (latter two) priests were professors of the Pontifical "Marianum" Theological Faculty in Rome.

Some priests of the order administered Holy Sacraments to her. Others helped Father Berti, who meanwhile had become aged and suffering.

3. His Holiness Pope Pius XII

Since the writings of Maria Valtorta present themselves as emanating from supernatural visions and dictations, the aforementioned Father Berti took council with two very experienced persons, that is with his Excellency Msgr. Alphonse Carinci, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and vicar for the Causes of the Saints; and the Rev. Augustine Bea, S.J., confessor of Pope Pius XII, rector and professor of the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome. Both advised having type-written copies of such writings conveyed to his Holiness Pope Pius XII, through a prelate of the Secretary of State.

Pius XII became personally acquainted with these writings, as I was assured by the bearer himself of the typescript. And on the 26th of February 1948, the Pontiff received in special audience - attested by *L'Osservatore Romano* of these days - Father Berti, accompanied by two confreres, Father Migliorini, ex-prefect apostolic in Africa, and Father Andrew M. Cecchin, Prior of the International College of the Servites of Mary in Rome, and (the Pontiff) pronounced the following verbatim words: "Publish this work just as it is; he who reads it will understand." And he added: "one hears talk of so many visions and revelations. I do not say that all are true; but some of them could be true."

Father Berti asked the Pope if they should remove the inscriptions: “Visions” and “Dictations” (from *The Poem* before publishing it). And he answered that nothing should be removed. As soon as the three priests had come out of the Papal audience, they stopped by the stairs and wrote on a card the verbatim words of the Pope, in order never to forget them.

4. The Holy Office

But, in 1949, the Holy Office, of which Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani was then secretary, and Msgr. Pietro Parente the assessor, summoned the Father Procurator General of the Order of the Servites of Mary, and Father Berti who was considered to be the principal person accountable. Msgr. Pepe and Father Berruti, O.P., officials of the Holy Office, read the judgement (of the Holy Office) and wanted Father Berti to sign it.

With this judgement, they commanded Father Berti to deliver to the Holy Office all of Maria Valtorta’s manuscripts and typescripts, evidently in order to destroy them or keep them shut away for ever: “Here they will remain in a tomb.” said Msgr. Pepe.

Father Berti brought all the typescripts in his possession; but he could not deliver the manuscripts, because they were kept by the writer (Valtorta); and he could not deliver all of the typescripts, because (some were) possessed by other persons who did not want to be deprived of them.

Moreover, and finally, the Holy Office forbade the publication of the Work, threatening to place it on the Index in case of eventual publication.

Father Berti was unable to reveal to the Holy Office the words spoken to him by Pope Pius XII in audience, because he was not permitted to speak, but was only allowed to listen and to sign the judgement without comment. Such were the methods of that time - before the (Vatican II) Council.

The Holy Office, however, was good to the infirm Maria Valtorta, and did not communicate the judgement to her. She knew it from Father Berti, out of necessity, and was made desolate over it. Her condition worsened.

5. Attempts at Appeal

Fr. Berti, to console Maria Valtorta - growing always more ill - observed to her that the Pope was above the Holy Office, and therefore the word of the Pope [“Publish” (it)] was of greater worth than that of the Holy Office [“Forbidden to publish” (it)]. But the writer (Valtorta) remained perplexed and feared the Index and ex-communication. Therefore she desired and asked for an appeal, that the sentence of the Holy Office be revoked. And some did appeal to that Congregation, but in vain. The response was: “Id melius quod prius”. In other words: “Let it stand what was decided before”.

Then Maria Valtorta expressed the desire that an appeal to the Holy Father himself, Pius XII, who in 1948 had said “publish” (it), be attempted.

Archbishop Msgr. Carinci, friend, protector, admirer of the person and the writings of Maria Valtorta, went more than once to visit her, promised her an appeal to the Pope, and wrote a fine certification to deliver to him in audience.

When Fr. Bea saw and read the certification of Archbishop Carinci, he wanted to draw up one of his own, very favourable, in which he compared Valtorta with the mystic Anne Catherine Emmerich.

After Fr. Bea, Msgr. Lattanzi, dean of the Lateran Theological Faculty and consultant to the Holy Office, also wrote a favourable certification; and so also legal counsellor Professor Camilo Corsanego, dean of consistorial counsellors for the Holy See and a teacher at the Lateran. All these certifications were joined to that written by Fr. Roschini, OSM, renowned mariologist of the pontifical “Marianum” and Lateran Theological Faculty. Archbishop Carinci wanted a photostatic copy of these, to present in audience to the Holy Father, Pius XII. But such an audience did not take place in 1950, given the heavy work of the Holy Year which burdened the Pontiff.

6. Publication of the First Edition of the Life of Jesus, Entitled *The Poem of the Man-God*

In the meantime the months passed, and Father Roschini, who knew of Valtorta and was an admirer of her mystical writings, said with insistence to Fr. Berti: “Go to the Pisani Publishing House!”

Since Father Roschini was of the Holy Office, Fr. Berti thought that that Dicastery had meanwhile become favourable to publication (of *The Poem*). So one day he went to the Isle of Liri, in the province of Frosinone, and there met with Sir Michael Pisani, proprietor of the Publishing House, who, having promptly become acquainted with Maria Valtorta whom he visited, and with her writings, decided to print them. Fr. Berti was afraid of the Holy Office, Valtorta was terrified of it and did not want to make a decision to give her permission and lend out the typescripts. But later she decided to stipulate a standard contract with Michael Pisani, who declared once again that he harboured no fear about the outcome of the work, being encouraged in this by his friends. And so the first edition of the “Life of Jesus” came out, entitled in the meantime *The Poem of the Man-God*, but without any (theological) notes, without any introduction, with a modest typographical appearance, and in four excessively large volumes. But all of it came out within the year 1959.

7. Placement on the Index of Forbidden Books

But the Holy Office did not forget its command: the prohibition and threat pronounced in 1949. And on January 6, 1960, the Holy Office placed the first edition of *The Poem...* on the Index of Forbidden Books.

L’Osservatore Romano, in an article for that day, justified the aforesaid condemnation, not for doctrinal errors, but for the offence of disobedience. But in truth there was no disobedience, because Pope Pius XII, in 1948, had said: “publish (it)”; and only the Holy Office - which was subject to him - had strangely prohibited its publication.

All this notwithstanding, that first edition spread, was appreciated, and many readers felt in it the hand of God.

8. Second Edition of *The Poem of the Man-God*

Sir Michael Pisani was not impressed by the aforesaid “Life of Jesus” being placed on the Index. But feeling somewhat aged and suffering, he instead entrusted the task of publishing the Valtorta writings to his son, Doctor Emilio Pisani, a doctor of jurisprudence and then in the prime of life.

It was then that the Pisani Publishing House, with full confidence in God’s help and in the future, conceived and decided on the publication of a second edition of *The Poem*, with a better cover and better paper, with newer and cleaner type, in less thick volumes. Moreover, Pisani asked Fr. Berti to provide the new edition with explanatory notes of difficult passages, and to point out the biblical substrata of the Work. The edition was provided also with illustrations redacted by Lorenzo Ferri, under the personal guidance of Maria Valtorta.

Thus this Work on the Gospel came out in ten fine volumes, provided with an introduction and notes, and was pleasing to all. The previously mentioned Fr. Roschini customarily repeated that such a new edition was not to be considered on the Index, because it was totally renewed, conformed in all to the original, and provided with notes that removed any doubt and which demonstrated the solidity and orthodoxy of the Work.

9. Attempted Interview with His Holiness Pope Paul VI

Fr. Berti was nevertheless always worried and very anxious because of the placing of *The Poem* on the Index, though it was only of the first edition; and in his confidence of having the decision revoked and obtaining security for the second edition, he began by asking for an audience with Msgr. Pasquale Macchi, the faithful and dynamic private secretary of Pope Paul VI (1963).

Msgr. Macchi engaged in an amiable dialogue with Fr. Berti for about an hour, during which, with lively astonishment, he was heard to repeat that the Work was not on the Index, and that the Pope (Paul VI), when he was Archbishop of Milan, had read one volume, had appreciated it and sent the whole Work to the seminary (of Milan).

The secretary accepted the various volumes of the second edition, which had meanwhile come out, but after a few days, he diplomatically had them returned to Fr. Berti with a note in which he suggested that (Fr. Berti) direct himself to the Secretary of State, in the event he wished to approach His Holiness in person. And thus evaporated the desire and project of an interview with Paul VI.

10. The Holy Office Authorises the Second Edition

In December of 1960, Fr. Berti was called to the Holy Office and was received by Fr. Mark Girauda, O.P., Commissioner of that Congregation, who was very amiable. Fr. Berti, seeing that this time he could handle it calmly, related to the Commissioner the words: [“Publish (it)”] given in audience by Pope Pius XII in 1948, and brought to him photostats of the certifications of the “Life of Jesus” (i.e. *The Poem...*) written by Maria Valtorta - three of these certificates turned out to be drawn up by the consultants of the Holy Office, that is, by Fr. (later, Cardinal) Bea, S.J., by Msgr. Lattanzi, and by Fr. Roschini.

Fr. Girauda, who knew nothing of the words of Pius XII and of the certifications of these three personages of the Holy Office itself, after having received Fr. Berti many times, after having himself consulted with his Superiors and having pondered on the certifications, spoke these words: “Continue to publish this second edition. We will see how the world receives it.”

And thus *The Poem* came out, and continues to come out, not only by order of Pius XII, but also with the approval of the Holy Office. (1961).

...

12. Valtorta Writings edited through 1978

The first work published was the “Life of Jesus”. It was originally entitled “The Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed to Little John.” The name of “Little John” approximated Valtorta to John, the great apostle and evangelist, and at the same time distinguished her from him, indicating simultaneously her humility and inferiority (to him). But that earlier title seemed a little imprudent to Valtorta herself, who imagined various other ones, yet without being satisfied with them. Then the great physician, professor Nicholas Pende, admirer of Valtorta and of her writings, suggested to her the title of “Poem of Jesus”. But since this title already existed for a little poetic composition, and its author protested, (the title) was retouched by Fr. Berti into *The Poem of the Man-God*. And thus conceived and retouched, it pleased Maria Valtorta herself, who approved it and made it her own.

Two editions, quite different, of this life of Jesus (*The Poem...*) have been published. The first, printed in the years 1956-9, was very modest: four overly thick volumes, without an introduction, unprovided with even the most prudent notes, was imperfect even as regards the text, because it did not directly reproduce the Valtorta manuscript, but a typewritten copy very unfaithful and incomplete. And this was the edition that met the difficulties described in their place (see #7 above).

The second edition, instead, under the editorship of Dr. Emilio Pisani, printed in the years 1960-67 in 10 manageable volumes, was redacted on the basis of a strict comparison with the original Valtorta manuscript. and was provided with thousands of theological notes, especially biblical, prepared with years of intense labour by Fr. Berti. And this second edition is the one which has met with no trouble, but has been authorised in 1961, even by the Holy Office, now called the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, as was related above in these pages at the proper time (see #10 above).

This edition has been reprinted many times; rather, in consideration of these reprintings, those who do not reflect that where there is a new typesetting, it is a new edition, usually speak of a third and fourth edition. (Note: in 1996, the editor, Emilio Pisani, published this second edition in a revised and updated new third edition in Italian. For this latest edition, the editor has chosen to return to an earlier title originally intended for “The Poem”, and which will appear in all subsequent editions.: “The Gospel as it was Revealed to Me” -- Trans.)

The second doctrinal work printed (1972), and up till now in a single edition but well disseminated and appreciated, is *The Book of Azariah*. This volume was originally entitled “Angelic Masses”, that is, Sunday and Festive Masses, illuminated under the Dictation of Maria Valtorta’s Guardian Angel, Azariah. But to exclude the possibility of erroneous interpretation, that is, that the Angels celebrate the Holy Mass as do priests on earth, among the various prospective titles, and after reflection and prayer, the title *The Book of Azariah* was chosen, in deference to the angel to whom Maria attributed the Dictations.

The third doctrinal work published and comprised in a thick volume of 800 pages, was edited in 1976 and entitled by the editor of the edition, Dr. Emilio Pisani: *The Notebooks of 1943*, precisely because it contains all the Dictations written down by Valtorta in 1943. *The Poem*, instead, contains “Visions” and “Dictations” written above all between 1944 and 1947.

The fourth doctrinal work, of 300 pages, edited in 1977, bears the title given it by Valtorta herself: *Lessons on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*. Valtorta wrote these lessons between 1943 and 1950, under the Dictation, she says, of her Sweet Guest or its Most Holy Author, that is, the Holy Spirit. The volume is provided with a very useful subject index, as is *The Notebooks of 1943*, an index redacted by Dr. Emilio Pisani. (There was no subject index for the English editions of either “The Poem” or “The Book of Azariah”. In each case, a subject index has been compiled for Readers’ Group members. “Lessons on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans” is not yet available in English - Ed.)

To these four works already published and attributed by Valtorta to supernatural Visions and Dictations, should be added her *Autobiography*, which Valtorta herself composed solely with her writer’s skill in 1943, under obedience to her spiritual director. The volume is about 450 pages, and was edited in 1969.

13. Translations

Only the greater Work, that is *The Poem...*, has up till now been translated into Spanish, French, German. A Spanish translation in one volume has come out, which embraces two volumes of the original Italian. [Note: This and the following remarks were true in 1978 when Fr. Berti was writing this testimony. However as of now (1997), “The Poem” has been translated into English as well as Dutch, Croatian, Japanese, Korean, Swahili, and Malayalam in India, where Bishop Sooster Pakiam M. enthusiastically granted his Imprimatur, March 17, 1993. Some of Valtorta’s other writings have also now appeared in English. -- Trans.]

There has also come out an anthology in the Japanese tongue, which sold over 8,000 copies in a few weeks.

Finally, at present, there has been one volume published in Portuguese, which embraces the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, with an Imprimatur.

Other translations are projected or in process of preparation; soon there will come out some volumes in French translation.

The original (Italian) of Valtorta’s Work is already widespread in the world, given the fact that a good many priests have studied in Rome and (also) Italians have emigrated in the millions, scattered a little in so many nations.

14. Unedited Valtorta Writings (1978)

First of all there remain to be published 282 of the Visions and Dictations, which belong to (the years) 1944, ‘45, ‘46, ‘47, ‘53. Prominent among these Visions are those on the Martyrdom of various saints, some known, some unknown ...

Then, perhaps, as was done for St. Catherine of Sienna, in order to know the person better, there remain to be published around 2,000 pages of letters written by Valtorta to various persons, or by them to her.

Finally, numerous certifications could be published (some hundred or so pages) on the person and writings of Maria Valtorta. Some of these are of great value, as those of Fr. (Cardinal) Augustine Bea, of Msgr. Hugo Lattanzi, Msgr. Alphonse Carinci, Fr. Gabriel M. Roschini, and some other lay scientists.

15. Conclusion

I knew Maria Valtorta in 1946, and, given the fact that she lived close enough to my mama, I often met with her at least once a month until the year of her death in 1961.

I read and annotated (by myself from 1960 to 1974, with the help of some confreres from 1974 on) all the Valtorta writings, both edited and unedited.

I can certify that Valtorta did not possess, through her own industry, all the vast, profound, clear and varied learning which is evident in her writings. She possessed, in fact, and at times consulted, only the Catechism of Pius X and a common popular Bible.

Since Maria was a humble and sincere woman, we can accept the explanation which she herself furnished about her learning: attributing it to supernatural Visions and Dictations, besides her natural skill as a writer. And this is also the opinion of Miss Martha Diciotti who assisted Valtorta for 30 years, and who today receives so many visitors in (Valtorta’s) little room.

It is also the opinion of the Editor, Dr. Emilio Pisani, who hears the written and oral echo of so many readers.

N.B. Of all that which I, Fr. Corrado Berti, OSM, have written in these pages, I have been an eye witness.

Moreover, I noted down these events on paper when they occurred, and I sent them in the form of a letter to Valtorta, and later, after her death, to the one who represents her.

Rome, 8 December, 1978

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

(signed) Fr. Conrad M. Berti, O.S.M.

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இதற்குரிய அரிய பொக்கிஷம் நமது உடலுடையதும் தேவ அன்பின் பிழைப்பும் அன்பு ஆசிரியர் மும் மக்களுக்குக் கொட்டி
புது நம் பெரிய பாதகம் அல்ல, சேகவை தேடித்து, தேசிக்கச் செய்யும்
நீடுபற்றும். அன்புமீள், சிவங்கலும் மிழ்ச்சியும் நன்றியும்
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தெரிவிக்கிறோம்.

இதற்கு இது பத்தகங்களையும் இவ்வாறு வெளியிட உதவ
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கிறோம்.

மங்கள வார்த்தை நூல்கள், 25 மார்ச் 2001 2-ம் பதிப்பு.	இந்த அப்போஸ்தலர்கள் "ரோமர் மீஸ்திகள்" சகாயமாது பட்டணம் துத்துக்குடி - 628 002.
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