

CHAPTER III

Knowledge of Self

*Self-knowledge with regard to sin is the bread which must be eaten with food of every kind, however dainty it may be . . .*¹

In the crystal globe that represents the just soul, God is, for Saint Teresa, the great reality, the lover who from the inmost Mansions attracts irresistibly its mind and heart. Nevertheless, God must not, she thinks, cause the soul that serves Him as a temple, to be completely forgotten. It is of the highest importance for the soul to know itself. She asserts:

Would it not be a sign of great ignorance, my daughters, if a person were asked who he was, and could not say, and had no idea who his father or his mother was, or from what country he came? Though that is great stupidity, our own is incomparably greater if we make no attempt to discover what we are, and only know that we are living in these bodies.²

Here, the realistic good sense of Saint Teresa is speaking. She must reflect before acting; she wants to know all the facts; she needs every light there is to guide her on her journey towards God: "this matter of self-knowledge must never be neglected."³

How, in fact, could we prudently organize and lead our interior life without knowing the interior compass within which it is to unfold? Without this knowledge we would be doomed, if not to complete failure, at least to great sufferings. Thus the Saint cries out:

¹ *Life*, xiii; Peers, I, 80.

² I Mansions, i; Peers, II, 201-2.

³ *Life*, xiii; Peers, I, 80.

O Lord, do Thou remember how much we have to suffer on this road through lack of knowledge! The worst of it is that, as we do not realize we need to know more when we think about Thee, we cannot ask those who know; indeed we have not even any idea what there is for us to ask them. So we suffer terrible trials because we do not understand ourselves; and we worry over what is not bad at all, but good, and think it very wrong. Hence proceed the afflictions of many people who practise prayer, and their complaints of interior trials—especially if they are unlearned people—so that they become melancholy, and their health declines, and they even abandon prayer altogether.⁴

We could not so effectually advance towards God without knowing the structure of the soul, its possibilities, its deficiencies, the laws that regulate its activities. Again, it is the knowledge of what we are and of what we are worth that will permit us to take before God the attitude of truth that He requires:

I was wondering once why Our Lord so dearly loved this virtue of humility; and all of a sudden without, I believe, my having previously thought of it—the following reason came into my mind: that it is because God is Sovereign Truth and to be humble is to walk in truth, for it is absolutely true to say that we have no good thing in ourselves, but only misery and nothingness; and anyone who fails to understand this is walking in falsehood. He who best understands it is most pleasing to Sovereign Truth because he is walking in truth.⁵

This knowledge of self which makes truth triumph in one's attitudes and actions is indispensable at all times, at the beginning as well as in all the degrees of the spiritual life:

However high a state the soul may have attained, self-knowledge is incumbent upon it, and this it will never be able to neglect even should it so desire.⁶

And so it must be the object of our daily thought:

However sublime your contemplation may be, take care both to begin and to end every period of prayer with self-examination.⁷

The Saint sums up her teaching by this affirmation, clear and striking as a maxim:

⁴ IV Mansions, i; Peers, II, 233-4.

⁵ VI Mansions, x; 323.

⁶ I Mansions, ii; 208.

⁷ *Way of Perfection*, xxxix; Peers, II, 171.

And self-knowledge with regard to sin is the bread which must be eaten with food of every kind, however dainty it may be, on this road of prayer: without this bread we could not eat our food at all.⁸

Knowledge of oneself in the light of God will assure to the spiritual life its equilibrium, will make it human at the same time as sublime, practical as well as very elevated.

A. Object of the knowledge of self

All that we have quoted shows us that Teresa wants to know herself only in order to attain to God more surely. It is almost exclusively in the light of God that she is going to ask for the necessary bread of self-knowledge. God must be at the same time the end and the beginning of the knowledge of self.

This characteristic, of a high practical importance, will be properly stressed in a moment. It was necessary to point it out here in order to show precisely under what particular aspect that twofold knowledge of self, which Saint Teresa demands from her disciple, is going to be developed: a certain *psychological* knowledge of the soul, and a knowledge that we can call *spiritual*, which bears on the value of the soul before God.

I. PSYCHOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

In an Introduction to the works of Saint Teresa, M. Emery, restorer of Saint Sulpice after the French Revolution, declared that Saint Teresa had advanced the science of psychology more than any philosopher. In her treatises, in fact, descriptions with precise nuances of the interior world of the soul and of the life that goes on there are abundant. The Saint opens up to us her rich nature which vibrates to the impressions of the exterior world, and still more to the potent shocks as well as the delicate unctions of grace. The regions of the soul, which to us are habitually obscure, are all luminous to her. She writes:

It is very important, sisters, that we should not think of the soul as of something dark. It must seem dark to most of us, as we cannot

⁸ *Life*, xiii; Peers, I, 80.

see it, for we forget that there is not only a light that we can see, but also an interior light, and so we think that within our soul there is some kind of darkness.⁹

Without doubt, this light is that of God Himself who enlightens the depths of the soul and, acting on the different powers, produces in them effects just as the rays of the sun, playing through the branches of a tree, enrich them with variegated tonalities.

Thanks to her fine spiritual sense and her marvelous power of analysis, Saint Teresa penetrates into this interior world, picks up all its vibrations, distinguishes the activity and the reactions of each one of the faculties, dissects in a manner the soul itself to its very depths. From her works, one could draw out a treatise on psychology, interesting and alive as a demonstration lesson. We shall limit ourselves to pointing out those psychological truths that seem the most important for the spiritual life.

1. The first is the distinction of the faculties. We "fail to realize that there is an interior world close at hand,"¹⁰ writes the Saint. All is not so simple as the simplicity of our soul would seem to require. This world is complex and moving. Forces are stirred up there in opposite directions. The violence and diversity of these movements under the action of God were for Saint Teresa a cause of anguish. An explanation on the distinction of the faculties, each of which has its own activity, was enlightening for her:

I have sometimes been terribly oppressed by this turmoil of thoughts and it is only just four years ago that I came to understand by experience that thought (or, to put it more clearly, imagination) is not the same thing as understanding. I asked a learned man about this and he said I was right, which gave me no small satisfaction. For as the understanding is one of the faculties of the soul, I found it very hard to see why it was sometimes so timid; whereas thoughts, as a rule, fly so fast that only God can restrain them.¹¹

⁹ VII Mansions, i; Peers, II, 330.

¹⁰ IV Mansions, i; 234.

¹¹ *Ibid.*; 233.

2. The action of God in her soul permitted Saint Teresa to distinguish in it two regions: an *exterior* region, ordinarily the more disturbed, in which are the imagination which creates and produces images, and the understanding which reasons and discourses (these two faculties are volatile and could not remain for a long time enchained, even by a powerful action of God); a region *more interior* and more peaceful where are the intelligence properly so-called, the will, and the essence of the soul, which are nearer to the sources of grace, more docile also to its control, and remain more easily submissive to it in spite of exterior agitations.

This distinction between the exterior and the interior, between sense and spirit, that we find over again with different terminologies in all the mystical writers,¹² will permit her to give a precise teaching on the interior attitude to be kept in contemplation when the depth of the soul is taken hold of by God, while the understanding and especially the imagination are agitated:

It exasperated me to see the faculties of the soul, as I thought, occupied with God and recollected in Him, and the thought, on the other hand, confused and excited. . . .

Just as we cannot stop the movement of the heavens, revolving as they do with such speed, so we cannot restrain our thought. And then we send all the faculties of the soul after it, thinking we are lost, and have misused the time that we are spending in the presence of God. Yet the soul may perhaps be wholly united with Him in the Mansions very near His presence, while thought remains in the outskirts of the castle, suffering the assaults of a thousand wild and venomous creatures. . . .

As I write this, the noises in my head are so loud that I am beginning to wonder what is going on in it. . . . My head sounds just as if it were full of brimming rivers, and then as if all the water in those rivers came suddenly rushing downward; and a host of little birds seem to be whistling, not in the ears, but in the upper part of the head, where the higher part of the soul is said to be. . . .

¹² Saint John of the Cross describes a very high experience of this distinction between the higher spiritual part and the lower sensitive part, in the *Dark Night*. Bk. II, xxiv.

All this physical turmoil is no hindrance either to my prayer or to what I am saying now, but the tranquility and love in my soul are quite unaffected, and so are its desires and clearness of mind.¹³

From this experience the Saint draws the conclusion that "it is not good for us to be disturbed by our thoughts or to worry about them in the slightest."¹³

3. The flight of the spirit brings Saint Teresa to face another psychological problem, less important than the preceding, but more difficult; and the mere statement of it reveals the penetration of her thought. The problem is this: Is there a distinction between the soul and the spirit, between the essence of the soul and the intellectual power?

Certain philosophies answer her that they are the same thing. And yet, in the flight of the spirit she is aware at the same time that "the soul really seems to have left the body," and that the soul has not left it since the person "is not dead."¹⁴ How explain this phenomenon? She wishes she had the science to do so. Lacking this, she will clarify the problem by a comparison:

Anyone who has experience of this, and possesses more ability than I, will perhaps know how to express it. . . . I have often thought that if the sun can remain in the heavens and yet its rays are so strong that without its moving thence they can none the less reach us here, it must be possible for the soul and the spirit, which are as much the same thing as are the sun and its rays, to remain where they are, and yet, through the power of the heat that comes to them from the true Sun of Justice, for some higher part of them to rise above itself.¹⁵

2. SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

A few psychological notions are necessary for the spiritual person in order to avoid sufferings and difficulties; it is much more important, however, to possess that knowledge that we have called "spiritual" which reveals to the soul what it is before God, the supernatural riches with which it is adorned, the evil tendencies that hinder its movement towards God.

¹³ IV Mansions, i; Peers, II, 233-4.

¹⁴ VI Mansions, v; 295.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; 296; Cf. also, *Life*, xviii; Peers, I, 109.

If psychological knowledge is useful for perfection, spiritual knowledge is a very part of it, for it feeds humility and involves it. And so it is of the latter that Saint Teresa says that it is the bread with which one must eat all the other foods, however delicate they may be.

Divine action, by the diverse effects it produces in the soul, has revealed the organization of the interior world. It is only under the light of God that we can now explore the triple domain of the spiritual knowledge of self.

a. *What we are before God*

God is the friend of order and of truth, says Saint Teresa. Order and truth require that our relations with God be based on what He is and what we are.

God is the infinite Being, our Creator. We are finite beings, His creatures who depend in everything on Him. Between God and us: the abyss of infinitude that separates the Infinite from the finite, the eternal self-subsistent Being from the creature brought into existence in time. The intimacy to which God calls us does not fill up that abyss. Now and always God will be God; and man, even divinized by grace, will still remain a finite creature.

Reason gives us a glimmering light on the abyss of the Infinite; faith enlightens us more fully. The gifts of the Holy Ghost give a certain experience of it. By looking into that abyss, the soul learns obscurely what it itself is in the perspective of the Infinite. "Do you know, my daughter, who you are and who I am?" our Lord asked Saint Catherine of Siena. "You are she who is not; I am He who is."¹⁶

Saint Teresa calls royal those souls who, in the flash of illumination or a swift embrace of divine love, have had some glimpse of the abyss of the Infinite divine. She wishes that kings might have such knowledge, in order that they might

¹⁶ *Dialogue x.*

better learn the value of human things and discover their duty in the perspective of the Infinite.

No creature has ever looked into that abyss as did Christ, whose gaze, illumined even here below by intuitive vision, penetrated into it most marvelously; yet His human gaze, it too, lost itself in the infinite immensity of the Divinity which dwelt within Him. This sight plunged Him into depths of adoration never attained by another: "Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart," He said under the overwhelming sweetness of the unction that penetrated Him. No one could be humble before God as Christ was, nor even as the Virgin Mary, because no one can measure as they did the abyss of the infinite that separates man from his Creator.

But Jesus and Mary were of a perfect purity. We are sinners. We have used our liberty to refuse to obey Him on whom we depend absolutely every instant of our existence. The creature who deserves to be called "nothing" before the infinite Being, braves God by disregarding His rights; and that bravado would appear ridiculous if God had not left him the privilege of disturbing the realization of the designs of Providence. Sin, which is an act of ingratitude, a crime of high treason, is also a disorder in creation.

Sin disappears under the divine pardon. To have sinned remains a fact that shows the perversity of our nature.

This science of the divine transcendence, in which there is revealed the nothingness of the creature and the true face of sin, is the science *par excellence* of the contemplative. What has he contemplated, if he does not know God? And if he does not know his own nothingness, then he has not found God. For he who has truly touched God, has experienced in his being the extreme littleness and the profound misery of our human nature.

Thus the double knowledge of the all of God and the nothingness of man is fundamental for the spiritual life, develops

with it, and, according to Saint Angela of Foligno, in its eminent degree constitutes perfection.¹⁷ It creates in the soul a profound humility that nothing can disturb; it places the soul in an attitude of truth which attracts all the gifts of God.

In reading the writings of Saint Teresa, one has the impression that she was constantly looking into this double abyss of the all and the nothing. Through multiple contacts with God, she knew Him experimentally until, having arrived at spiritual marriage, she beheld Him in almost constant intellectual vision. It is in this twofold light too that she acquires that profound respect for God, the touching fear of a humble subject for His Majesty, and that horror of sin, which are so happily allied to the ardors and flights of her daring love as daughter and spouse. This science of the Infinite, expressed sometimes in powerful terms, inspires all her attitudes, reveals itself in her judgments and her counsels, and causes the sweet perfume of simple and profound humility, free and delightful, which is one of her most captivating charms, to rise constantly from her soul.

b. *Supernatural riches*

Self-knowledge must not reveal to us only one aspect of the truth, even one so fundamental as that of the nothingness of the creature before the infinitude of God. It must assure in us the triumph of all truth, even if it bring to light disconcerting contrasts. These contrasts do, in fact, exist in man.

A creature, so insignificant before God and so often in revolt, the soul is nevertheless made to the image of God and capable of carrying on the divine operations of knowledge and of love; and it is called to be perfect as its heavenly Father is perfect. Saint Teresa demands that these truths, which constitute the grandeur of the soul, be not diminished in any way. She says:

¹⁷ "To know oneself! to know God! that is the perfection of man. . . . Here, all immensity, all perfection and the absolute good; there: nothing; to know that, is the end of man. . . . To be eternally bent over the double abyss, that is my secret!" (*Sainte Angèle de Foligno*. French translation by Hello, ch. lviii).

In speaking of the soul, we must always think of it as spacious, ample and lofty; and this can be done without the least exaggeration, for the soul's capacity is much greater than we can realize.¹⁸

And so in order to give an "idea of the good qualities"¹⁹ of the sublime dignity and beauty of the soul which is "the palace occupied by the King,"²⁰ the Saint does not hesitate to use the most brilliant comparison. The soul is "a castle made of a single diamond or of a very clear crystal."²¹ God makes of it a crystal, dazzling with light, a "castle, so beautiful and resplendent, this Orient pearl, this tree of life planted in the living waters of life—namely, in God."²² As for me, she adds, "I can find nothing with which to compare the great beauty of a soul and its great capacity."²³

The Christian ought to know his dignity. He ought not be ignorant, either, of the value of the many special graces he has received.

Saint Teresa never minimizes spiritual favors, nor progress that is made, even when they still leave room for numerous faults as in the third Mansions. Speaking of the soul that enjoys the prayer of quiet, she says, "It is very important that the soul which arrives thus far should recognize the great dignity of its state and the greatness of the favours which the Lord has granted it."²⁴ She does not leave it in ignorance of the sublime hopes contained in the graces received:

If God gives a soul such pledges, it is a sign that He has great things in store for it. It will be its own fault if it does not make great progress.²⁵

A soul to which such favors have been given must hold itself in high esteem. True humility triumphs in the truth; so

¹⁸ I Mansions, ii; Peers, II, 208.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, i; 202.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, ii; 207.

²¹ *Ibid.*, i; 201.

²² *Ibid.*, ii; 205.

²³ *Ibid.*, i; 201.

²⁴ *Life*, xv; Peers, I, 89.

²⁵ *Way of Perfection*, xxxi; Peers, II, 133.

much the worse for "the timid, half-learned men," writes the Saint, "whose shortcomings have cost me very dear." ²⁶ Truth frees us from danger, and from wondering "if the devil was transfigured into an angel of light." ²⁷ It moves us to gratitude towards God and urges us to be faithful to graces received.

c. *Evil tendencies*

Along with the supernatural riches in the interior castle illumined by the presence of God, Saint Teresa discovers "so many bad things—snakes, vipers, and venomous creatures," ²⁸ "so venomous and so active and it is so dangerous for us to be among them that it will be a miracle if we escape stumbling over them and falling." ²⁹ The reptiles represent the forces of evil settled in the soul, the bad tendencies consequent upon original sin. These are formidable powers that we cannot disregard; and so they constitute one of the most important objects of the knowledge of self.

Created in the state of justice and holiness, our first parents had received not only the supernatural gifts of grace, but also preternatural gifts (mastery over their passions, preservation from sickness and death) which ensured the rectitude and harmony of the powers and faculties of human nature. Deprived of these gifts by original sin, human nature remained intact but was wounded by this privation. Thenceforth, the dual, divergent forces of body and spirit war, one against the other. While awaiting the death that is going to separate them, each one claims its proper satisfactions. Man discovers in himself concupiscence, the disordinate strivings of the senses; and pride of mind and of the will, or the lusting of these two powers for self-independence. A profound disorder is embedded in human nature.

Adam and Eve transmitted to their posterity human nature

²⁶ V Mansions, i; Peers, II, 250.

²⁷ *Ibid.*; 249.

²⁸ I Mansions, ii; 210.

²⁹ II Mansions, i; 214.

such as their sin left it; hence, deprived of the superior gifts that completed it. This privation, with the disordered tendencies that it lets loose, is called original sin. These tendencies will take particular shape in each person according to the education received, the environment frequented, the sins committed, and habits contracted. Thus shaped, they will in turn be strongly rooted in the physical order by the forces and laws of heredity. In each soul, consequently, among the tendencies that accompany original sin, there are dominant ones that seem to win over the energies of the soul to their own profit. Their demands can be extreme. Even when less violent, they are still such formidable powers that it is impossible for the soul not to be carried along to numerous falls.³⁰

These tendencies exercise a sort of peaceful reign over the soul in the first Mansions. Combated in the second, they become irritated and make one suffer. The victory over their external manifestation, obtained in the third Mansions, leaves them still with strength interiorly. They draw sustenance now from less apparent sources to reappear once more on the spiritual plane when the divine light falls upon them there.

Saint John of the Cross points out certain effects of these evil tendencies, especially the privative one of eliminating God and God's action wherever they prevail:

For it is the same thing if a bird be held by a slender cord or by a stout one; since, even if it be slender, the bird will be as well held as though it were stout, for so long as it breaks it not and flies not away.³¹

Whatever may be the voluntary inordinacy and the smallness of its object, it will hinder union between the soul and God. Saint John also tells us in detail how these unruly desires

³⁰ There are some of these tendencies fixed in us by heredity, that seem to have several centuries of existence. They seem to resist all assaults, and, even when mortified in all their external manifestations, they raise up tidal floods at times that seem to carry away everything.

³¹ *Ascent*, Bk. I, xi; Peers, I, 53.

“cause torment, fatigue, weariness, blindness, and weakness in the soul.”⁸²

The whole of spiritual asceticism is motivated by these inclinations. In order to see the necessity of this asceticism, and guide it efficaciously, the spiritual man must know his evil tendencies, especially his dominant ones.

The knowledge of self will have no domain more complex, more changing, more difficult to explore, more painful and at the same time more useful to know, than these disordered appetites, the “venomous reptiles, so dangerous, and so disturbing” that each man bears in himself, that have made the saints groan and that, ceaselessly recalling to us our misery, urge us to incessant combat.

B. How to acquire knowledge of self?

The answer to this question should be apparent from what has just been said: It is the action of God in her soul that reveals to Saint Teresa the structure of the interior world; it is the light of God that discovers to her what she is, the value of the supernatural riches and the harmfulness of evil inclinations. The conclusion is clear: it is in the light of God that the soul learns to know itself. This important point of the spiritual doctrine of Saint Teresa deserves to be emphasized.

Are not contemplatives often reproached with being self-centered, of speaking constantly of themselves, of self-complacently displaying their graces, their sentiments, and of seeing the world only through the veil of their own interior lights and visions?

And in fact, is there not a great danger for the contemplative who must seek God in the depths of his soul, of finding frequently only himself or at least of perceiving, in the silent obscurity that surrounds the life of God within, only the emotions of sensibility and the confused agitation of the faculties, amplified by the silence?

⁸² *Ibid.*; 58.

These reproaches and these dangers place in singular relief the counsels of Saint Teresa, who asks the soul not to seek to know itself by analyzing itself directly, but to search itself under the light of God. This is, besides, the best way to know oneself well:

As I see it, we shall never succeed in knowing ourselves unless we seek to know God: let us think of His greatness and then come back to our own baseness; by looking at His purity we shall see our foulness; by meditation upon His humility, we shall see how far we are from being humble.

There are two advantages in this. First, it is clear that anything white looks very much whiter against something black, just as the black looks blacker against the white. It is the same with the divine perfections; they show forth much higher in contrast to our baseness. Secondly, if we turn from self towards God, our understanding and our will become nobler and readier to embrace all that is good: if we never rise above the slough of our own miseries we do ourselves a great disservice.³³

This advice is addressed to souls who are in the first Mansions and who must make use of considerations and reflections in order to know themselves. Later, in the higher Mansions, each time that the divine light reveals the grandeur of God, it will reveal at the same time the littleness and the misery of the creature. The knowledge of self thus acquired is more considerable and more profound:

When the Spirit of God is at work, there is no need to go about looking for ways of inducing humility and confusion; for the Lord Himself reveals these to us in a very different manner from any which we can find by means of our puny reflections, which are nothing by comparison with a true humility proceeding from the light given us in this way by the Lord. This produces a confusion which quite overwhelms us . . . the greater are the favors we receive from Him, the better we learn it.³⁴

The knowledge of self is precious; "it is the bread which must be eaten with food of every kind," and yet, adds the Saint, "it must be taken in moderate proportions. When a soul finds itself exhausted and realizes clearly that it has no

³³ I Mansions, ii; Peers, II, 209.

³⁴ *Life*, xv; Peers, I, 95.

goodness of its own . . . what need is there for it to waste its time on learning to know itself? It will be wiser to go on to other matters which the Lord sets before it.”³⁵ The Saint has pity on the lot of a person whom her director “kept in bondage for eight years; he would not allow her to aim at anything but self-knowledge.”³⁶

Hence, no examens uselessly prolonged; no repeated returns on self, which would nourish the natural tendencies of the soul, such as melancholy, and would permit the devil to suggest under color of humility all sorts of paralyzing thoughts, for thus:

We get a distorted idea of our own nature, and, if we never stop thinking about ourselves, I am not surprised if we experience these fears and others which are still worse. It is for this reason, daughters, that I say we must set our eyes upon Christ our Good, from whom we shall learn true humility. . . . Our understanding, as I have said, will then be ennobled, and self-knowledge will not make us timorous and fearful.³⁷

The action of the devil in the knowledge of self is notable enough for the Saint to point it out several times:

Beware also, daughters, of certain kinds of humility which the devil inculcates in us and which make us very uneasy about the gravity of our past sins. There are many ways in which he is accustomed to depress us. . . .

Everything such a person does appears to her to be dangerous, and all the service she renders, however good it may be, seems to her fruitless. She loses confidence and sits with her hands in her lap because she thinks she can do nothing well and that what is good in others is wrong in herself.³⁸

How distinguish the light of God from the false light of the devil, and the forms of self-knowledge that proceed from

³⁵ *Ibid.*, xiii; 80.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ I Mansions, ii; Peers, II, 209.

³⁸ *Way of Perfection*, xxxix; Peers, II, 169.

it? Saint Teresa will tell us, for in these important but delicate and often subtle questions, precisions are very useful:

Humility, however deep it be, neither disquiets nor troubles nor disturbs the soul; it is accompanied by peace, joy and tranquillity. Although, on realizing how wicked we are, we can see clearly that we deserve to be in hell, and are distressed by our sinfulness, and rightly think that everyone should hate us, yet, if our humility is true, this distress is accompanied by an interior peace and joy of which we should not like to be deprived. Far from disturbing or depressing the soul, it enlarges it and makes it fit to serve God better. The other kind of distress only disturbs and upsets the mind and troubles the soul, so grievous is it. I think the devil is anxious for us to believe that we are humble, and, if he can, to lead us to distrust God.³⁹

Here we are far, almost at the opposite pole, from sterile self-absorption with its cortege of vague reveries, of subtle analyses, of sometimes anguishing introspection and vain displays of self, often ridiculous and always proud.

Saint Teresa wants to know herself only to serve God better and to attain to Him who is the friend of order and of truth. Acquired under the light of God, this self-knowledge develops with the knowledge of God. It is united with humility and, whether it explores the structure of the soul, or reveals to man his smallness before the infinitude of divine grandeurs, or his sinful misery, it aspires only to make light reign and to make truth triumph. When self-knowledge arouses in a soul sorrowful contrition at the same time as ardent love, profound adoration and the most elevated aspirations, the feeling of its own powerlessness along with most generous resolutions, one can declare it authentic: it bears the divine mark of its origin, which is peace, spiritual balance, freedom, and fecundity.

³⁹ *Way of Perfection*, xxxix; Peers, II, 169-70.