

Respuesta
de la poetisa a la muy ilustre
Sor Filotea de la Cruz

Muy ilustre Señora, mi Señora:

(1) No mi voluntad, mi poca salud y mi justo temor han suspendido tantos días mi respuesta. ¿Qué mucho si, al primer paso, encontraba para tropezar mi torpe pluma dos imposibles? El primero (y para mí el más riguroso) es saber responder a vuestra doctísima, discretísima, santísima y amorosísima carta. Y si veo que preguntado el Angel de las Escuelas, Santo Tomás, de su silencio con Alberto Magno, su maestro, respondió que callaba porque nada sabía decir digno de Alberto, con cuánta mayor razón callaría, no como el Santo, de humildad, sino que en la realidad es no saber algo digno de vos. * El segundo imposible es saber agradeceros tan excesivo como no esperado favor, de dar a las prensas mis borrones: * merced tan sin medida que aun se le pasara por alto a la esperanza más ambiciosa y al deseo más fantástico; y que ni aun como ente de razón * pudiera caber en mis pensamientos; y en fin, de tal magnitud que no sólo no se puede estrechar a lo limitado de las voces, pero excede a la capacidad del agradecimiento, tanto por grande como por no esperado, que es lo que dijo Quintiliano: *Minorem spei, maiorem benefacti gloriam perunt*. Y tal, que enmudecen al beneficiado.

(2) Cuando la felizmente estéril para ser milagrosamente fecunda, madre del Bautista vio en su casa tan desproporcionada visita como la Madre del Verbo, se le entorpeció el entendimiento y se le suspendió el discurso; y así, en vez de agradecimientos, prorrumpió en dudas y preguntas: *Et unde hoc mihi?*

The Poet's Answer
to the Most Illustrious
Sor Filotea de la Cruz

Most illustrious Lady, my Lady:

(1) It has not been my will, but my scant health and a rightful fear that have delayed my reply for so many days. Is it to be wondered that, at the very first step, I should meet with two obstacles that sent my dull pen stumbling? The first (and to me the most insuperable) is the question of how to respond to your immensely learned, prudent, devout, and loving letter. For when I consider how the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, on being asked of his silence before his teacher Albertus Magnus, responded that he kept quiet because he could say nothing worthy of Albertus, then how much more fitting it is that I should keep quiet—not like the Saint from modesty, but rather because, in truth, I am unable to say anything worthy of you. * The second obstacle is the question of how to render my thanks for the favor, as excessive as it was unexpected, of giving my drafts and scratches to the press: * a favor so far beyond all measure as to surpass the most ambitious hopes or the most fantastic desires, so that as a rational being * I simply could not house it in my thoughts. In short, this was a favor of such magnitude that it cannot be bounded by the confines of speech and indeed exceeds all powers of gratitude, as much because it was so large as because it was so unexpected. In the words of Quintilian: "*They produce less glory through hopes, more glory through benefits conferred.*" And so much so, that the recipient is struck dumb.

(2) When the mother of [John] the Baptist—feliculously barren, so as to become miraculously fertile—saw under her roof so exceed-

¿De dónde a mí viene tal cosa? Lo mismo sucedió a Saúl cuando se vio electo y ungido rey de Israel: *Numquid non filius Lemini ego sum de minima tribu Israel, et cognatio mea novissima inter omnes de tribu Benjamin? Quare igitur locutus es mihi sermone istum?* Así yo dire: ¿de dónde, venerable Señora, de dónde a mí tanto favor? ¿Por ventura soy más que una pobre monja, la más mínima criatura del mundo y la más indigna de ocupar vuestra atención? Pues *quare locutus es mihi sermone istum? Et unde hoc mihi?*

(3) ★ Ni al primer imposible tengo más que responder que no ser nada digno de vuestros ojos; ni al segundo más que admiraciones, en vez de gracias, diciendo que no soy capaz de agradeceros la más mínima parte de lo que os debo. No es afectada modestia, * Señora, sino ingenua verdad de toda mi alma, que al llegar a mis manos, impresa, la carta que vuestra propiedad llamó Atenagórica, * prorumpí (con no ser esto en mí muy fácil) en lágrimas de confusión, porque me pareció que vuestro favor no era más que una reconvencción que Dios hace a lo mal que le correspondo; y que como a otros corrige con castigos, * a mí me quiere reducir a fuerza de beneficios. * Especial favor de que conozco ser su deudora, como de otros infinitos de su inmensa bondad; pero también especial modo de avergonzarme y confundirme: que es más primoroso medio de castigar hacer que yo misma, con mi conocimiento, sea el juez que me sentencie y condene mi ingrathud. Y así, cuando esto considero acá a mis solas, suelo decir: Bendito seáis vos, Señor, que no sólo no quisisteis en manos de otra criatura el juzgarme, y que ni aun en la mía lo pusisteis, sino que lo reservasteis a la vuestra, y me librateis a mí de mí y de la sentencia que yo misma me daría—que, forzada de mi propio conocimiento, no pudiera ser menos que la condenación—, y vos la reservasteis a vuestra misericordia, porque me amáis más de lo que yo me puedo amar.

(4) Perdonad, Señora mía, la digresión que me arrebató la fuerza de la verdad; y si la he de confesar toda, también es buscar fugios para huir la dificultad de responder, y casi me he determinado a dejarlo al silencio; pero como éste es cosa negativa, aunque explica mucho con el énfasis de no explicar, es necesario ponerle algún breve rótulo para que se entienda lo

ingly great a guest as the Mother of the Word, her powers of mind were dulled and her speech was halted; and thus, instead of thanks, she burst out with doubts and questions: "And whence is this to me . . . ?" The same occurred with Saul when he was chosen and anointed King of Israel: "Am not I a son of Lemini of the last tribe of Israel, and my kindred the last among all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then hast thou spoken this word to me?" Just so, I too must say: Whence, O venerable Lady, whence comes such a favor to me? By chance, am I something more than a poor nun, the slightest creature on earth and the least worthy of drawing your attention? Well, why then hast thou spoken this word to me? And whence is this to me?

I can answer nothing more to the first obstacle than that I am entirely unworthy of your gaze. To the second, I can offer nothing more than amazement, instead of thanks, declaring that I am unable to thank you for the slightest part of what I owe you. It is not false humility, * my Lady, but the candid truth of my very soul, to say that when the printed letter reached my hands—that letter you were pleased to dub "Worthy of Athena"—I burst into tears (a thing that does not come easily to me), tears of confusion. For it seemed to me that your great favor was nothing other than God's reproof aimed at my failure to return His favors, and while He corrects others with punishments, * He wished to chide me through benefits. * A special favor, this, for which I acknowledge myself His debtor, as I am indebted for infinitely many favors given by His immense goodness; but this is also a special way of shaming and confounding me. For it is the choicest form of punishment to cause me to serve, knowingly, as the judge who condemns and sentences my own ingratitude. And so when I consider this fully, here in solitude, it is my custom to say: Blessed are you, my Lord God, for not only did you forbear to give another creature the power to judge me, nor have you placed that power in my hands. Rather, you have kept that power for yourself and have freed me of myself and of the sentence I would pass on myself, which, forced by my own conscience, could be no less than condemnation. Instead you have reserved that sentence for your great mercy to declare, because you love me more than I can love myself.

My Lady, forgive the digression wrested from me by the power of truth; yet if I must make a full confession of it, this digression is at the same time a way of seeking evasions so as to flee the difficulty of making my answer. And therefore I had nearly resolved to leave the matter in silence; yet although silence ex-

que se pretende que el silencio diga: y si no, dirá nada el silencio, porque ése es su propio oficio: decir nada. Fue arrebatado el Sagrado Vaso de Elección al tercer Cielo, * y habiendo visto los arcanos secretos de Dios dice: *Audivit arcana Dei, 70 quae non licet homini loqui*. No dice lo que vio, pero que no lo puede decir, de manera que aquellas cosas que no se pueden decir, es menester decir siquiera que no se pueden decir, para que se entienda que el callar no es no haber qué decir, sino no haber en las voces lo mucho que hay que decir. Dice San Juan que si hubiera de escribir todas las maravillas que obró nuestro Redentor, no cupieran en todo el mundo los libros; y dice Vieyra, sobre este lugar, que en sola esta cláusula dijo más el Evangelista que en todo cuanto escribió; y dice muy bien el Fénix Lusitano * (pero ¿cuándo no dice bien, aun cuando 80 no dice bien?), porque aquí dice San Juan todo lo que dejó de decir y expresó lo que dejó de expresar. Así, yo, Señora mía, sólo responderé que no sé qué responder; sólo agradeceré diciendo que no soy capaz de agradeceros; y diré, por breve rótulo de lo que dejo al silencio, que sólo con la confianza de favorcida y con los valimientos de honrada, me puedo atrever a hablar con vuestra grandeza. Si fuere necesidad, perdonadla, pues es alhaja de la dicha, * y en ella ministraré yo más materia a vuestra benignidad y vos daréis mayor forma a mi reconocimiento. (5) No se hallaba digno Moisés, por balbuciente, * para hablar 90 con Faraón, y, después, el verse tan favorecido de Dios, le infunde tales alientos, que no sólo habla con el mismo Dios, sino que se atreve a pedirle imposibles: *Ostende mihi faciem tuam*. Pues así yo, Señora mía, ya no me parecen imposibles los que puse al principio, a vista de lo que me favorecéis; porque quien hizo imprimir la Carta tan sin noticia mía, quien la intituló, quien la costeó, quien la honró tanto (siendo de todo indigna por sí y por su autora), ¿qué no hará? ¿qué no perdonará?, ¿qué dejará de hacer y qué dejará de perdonar? Y así, debajo del supuesto de que hablo con el salvoconducto de vuestros favores y debajo del seguro de vuestra benignidad, y de que me habéis, como otro Asuero, dado a besar la punta del cetro de oro de vuestro cariño en señal de concederme benévola licencia para hablar y proponer * en vuestra venerable presencia, digo que recibo en mi alma vuestra santísima amonestación

plains much by the emphasis of leaving all unexplained, because 70 it is a negative thing, one must name the silence, so that what it signifies may be understood. Failing that, silence will say nothing, for that is its proper function: to say nothing. The holy Chosen Vessel was carried off to the third Heaven * and, having seen the arcane secrets of God, he says: "*That he was caught up into paradise, and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter*." He does not say what he saw, but he says that he cannot say it. In this way, of those things that cannot be spoken, it must be said that they cannot be spoken, so that it may be known that silence is kept not for lack of things to say, but because the many things there are to say cannot be contained in mere words. St. John says that if he were to write all of the wonders wrought by Our Redeemer, the whole world could not contain all the books. Vieyra says of this passage that in this one phrase the Evangelist says more than in all his other writings; and indeed how well the Luritanian Phoenix * speaks (but when is he not well-spoken, even when he speaks ill?), for herein St. John says all that he failed to say and expresses all that he failed to express. And so I, my Lady, shall answer only that I know not how to answer: I shall thank you only by saying that I know not how to give thanks; and I shall 90 say, by way of the brief label placed on what I leave to silence, that only with the confidence of one so favored and with the advantages granted one so honored, do I dare speak to your magnificence. If this be folly, please forgive it; for folly sparkles in good fortune's crown, * and through it I shall supply further occasion for your goodwill, and you shall better arrange the expression of my gratitude.

Moses, because he was a stutterer, * thought himself unworthy (5) to speak to Pharaoh. Yet later, finding himself greatly favored by God, he was so imbued with courage that not only did he speak 100 to God Himself, but he dared to ask of Him the impossible: "*Show me thy face*." And so it is with me, my Lady, for in view of the favor you show me, the obstacles I described at the outset no longer seem entirely insuperable. For one who had the letter printed, unbeknownst to me, who titled it and underwrote its cost, and who thus honored it (unworthy as it was of all this, on its own account and on account of its author), what will such a one not do? What not forgive? Or what fail to do or fail to forgive? Thus, sheltered by the assumption that I speak with the safe-conduct granted by your favors and with the warrant bestowed 110 by your goodwill, and by the fact that, like a second Ahasuerus, you have allowed me to kiss the top of the golden scepter of your

de aplicar el estudio a Libros Sagrados, que aunque viene en traje de consejo, tendrá para mí sustancia de precepto; con no pequeño consuelo de que aun antes parece que prevenía mi obediencia vuestra pastoral insinuación, * como a vuestra dirección, inferido del asunto y pruebas de la misma Carta. * Bien conozco que no cae sobre ella vuestra cuerdisma advertencia, sino sobre lo mucho que habréis visto de asuntos humanos que he escrito; y así, lo que he dicho no es más que satisfaceros con ella a la falta de aplicación que habréis inferido (con mucha razón) de otros escritos míos. Y hablando con más especialidad os confieso, con la ingenuidad que ante vos es debida y con la verdad y claridad que en mí siempre es natural y costumbre, que el no haber escrito mucho de asuntos sagrados no ha sido desafición, ni de aplicación la falta, sino sobra de temor y reverencia debida a aquellas Sagradas Letras, para cuya inteligencia yo me conozco tan incapaz y para cuyo manejo soy tan indigna; resonándome siempre en los oídos, con no pequeño horror, aquella amenaza y prohibición del Señor a los pecadores como yo: *Quare tu enarras iustitias meas, et assumis testamentum meum per os tuum?* Esta pregunta y el ver que aun a los varones doctos se prohibía el leer los Cantares hasta que pasaban de treinta años, y aun el Génesis: éste por su oscuridad, y aquellos porque de la dulzura de aquellos epitalamios no tomase ocasión la imprudente juventud de mudar el sentido en carnales afectos. Compruébalo mi gran Padre San Jerónimo, mandando que sea esto lo último que se estudie, por la misma razón: *Ad ultimum sine periculo discat Canticum Caritarum, ne si in exordio legerit, sub carnalibus verbis spiritualium nuptiarum Epithalamium non intelligens, vulheretur;* y Séneca dice: *Teneris in amnis haut clara est fides.* Pues ¿cómo me atreviera yo a tomarlo en mis indignas manos, repugnándolo el sexo, la edad y sobre todo las costumbres? Y así confieso que muchas veces este temor me ha quitado la pluma de la mano y ha hecho retroceder los asuntos hacia el mismo entendimiento de quien querían brotar; el cual inconveniente no topaba en los asuntos profanos, pues una herejía contra el arte no la castiga el Santo Oficio, * sino los discretos con risa y los críticos con censura, y ésta, *iusta vel iniusta, timenda non est*, pues deja comulgarse y oír misa, por lo cual me da poco o ningún cuidado; porque,

affection as a sign that you grant me kind license to speak and to plead my case * in your venerable presence, I declare that I receive in my very soul your most holy admonition to apply my study to Holy Scripture; for although it arrives in the guise of counsel, it shall have for me the weight of law. And I take no small consolation from the fact that it seems my obedience, as if at your direction, anticipated your pastoral insinuation, * as may be inferred from the subject matter and arguments of that very Letter. * I recognize full well that your most prudent warning touches not on the letter, but on the many writings of mine on humane matters that you have seen. And thus, all that I have said can do no more than offer that letter to you in recompense for the failure to apply myself which you must have inferred (and reasonably so) from my other writings. And to speak more specifically, I confess, with all the candor due to you and with the truth and frankness that are always at once natural and customary for me, that my having written little on sacred matters has sprung from no dislike, nor from lack of application, but rather from a surfeit of awe and reverence toward those sacred letters, which I know myself to be so incapable of understanding and which I am so unworthy of handling. For there always resounds in my ears the Lord's warning and prohibition to sinners like me, bringing with it no small terror: "*Why dost thou declare my justices, and take my covenant in thy mouth?*" With this question comes the reflection that even learned men were forbidden to read the Song of Songs, and indeed Genesis, before they reached the age of thirty: the latter text because of its difficulty, and the former so that with the sweetness of those epithalamiums, imprudent youth might not be stirred to carnal feelings. My great father St. Jerome confirms this, ordering the Song of Songs to be the last text studied, for the same reason: "*Then at last she may safely read the Song of Songs: if she were to read it at the beginning, she might be harmed by not perceiving that it was the song of a spiritual bridal expressed in fleshly language.*" And Seneca says, "*In early years, faith is not yet manifest.*" Then how should I dare take these up in my unworthy hands, when sex, and age, and above all our customs oppose it? And thus I confess that often this very fear has snatched the pen from my hand and has made the subject matter retreat back toward that intellect from which it wished to flow; an impediment I did not stumble across with profane subjects, for a heresy against art is not punished by the Holy Office * but rather by wits with their laughter and critics with their censure. And this, "*just or unjust, is not to be feared,*" for one is still permitted to take Com-

según la misma decisión de los que lo calumnian, ni tengo obligación para saber ni aptitud para acertar; luego, si lo yerro, ni es culpa ni es descrito. No es culpa, porque no tengo obligación; no es descrito, pues no tengo posibilidad de acertar, y *ad impossibilia nemo tenetur*. Y, a la verdad, yo nunca he escrito sino violentada y forzada y sólo por dar gusto a otros; 150 no sólo sin complacencia, sino con positiva repugnancia, porque nunca he juzgado de mí que tenga el caudal de letras e ingenio que pide la obligación de quien escribe; y así, es la ordinaria respuesta a los que me instan, y más si es asunto sagrado: ¿Qué entendimiento tengo yo, qué estudio, qué materiales, ni qué noticias para eso, sino cuatro bachillerías superficiales? Dejen eso para quien lo entienda, que yo no quiero ruido con el Santo Oficio, que soy ignorante y tiemblo de decir alguna proposición malsonante o torcer la genuina inteligencia de algún lugar. Yo no estudio para escribir, ni menos para enseñar 160 (que fuera en mí desmedida soberbia), sino sólo por ver si con estudiar ignoro menos. Así lo respondo y así lo siento.

(6) El escribir nunca ha sido dictamen propio, sino fuerza ajena; que les pudiera decir con verdad: *Vos me coegistis*. Lo que sí es verdad que no negaré (lo uno porque es notorio a todos, y lo otro porque, aunque sea contra mí, me ha hecho Dios la merced de darme grandísimo amor a la verdad) es que desde que me rayó la primera luz de la razón, fue tan vehementemente y poderosa la inclinación a las letras, que ni ajenas reprensiones – que he tenido muchas – , ni propias reflejas – que he hecho 170 no pocas – , han bastado a que deje de seguir este natural impulso que Dios puso en mí: Su Majestad sabe por qué y para qué; y sabe que le he pedido que apague la luz de mi entendimiento dejando sólo lo que baste para guardar su Ley, pues lo demás sobra, según algunos, en una mujer; y aun hay quien diga que daña. Sabe también Su Majestad que no consiguiendo esto, he intentado sepultar con mi nombre mi entendimiento, y sacrificársele sólo a quien me le dio; y que no otro motivo me entró en religión, no obstante que al desembarazo y quietud que pedía mi estudiantosa intención eran repugnantes los ejercicios y compañía de una comunidad; y después, en ella, sabe el Señor, y lo sabe en el mundo quien sólo lo debió saber, lo que intenté en orden a esconder mi nombre, y que no me lo

munion and hear Mass, so that it troubles me little if at all. For in such matters, according to the judgment of the very ones who slander me, I have no obligation to know how nor the skill to hit the mark, and thus if I miss it is neither sin nor discredit. No sin, because I had no obligation; no discredit, because I had no possibility of hitting the mark, and “no one is obliged to do the impossible.” And truth to tell, I have never written save when pressed and forced and solely to give pleasure to others, not only without taking satisfaction but with downright aversion, because I have never judged myself to possess the rich trove of learning and wit that is perforce the obligation of one who writes. This, then, is my usual reply to those who urge me to write, and the more so in the case of a sacred subject: What understanding do I possess, what studies, what subject matter, or what instruction, save four profundities of a superficial scholar? They can leave such things to those who understand them; as for me, I want no trouble with the Holy Office, for I am but ignorant and tremble lest I utter some ill-sounding proposition or twist the true meaning of some passage. I do not study in order to write, nor far less in order to teach (which would be boundless arrogance in me), but simply to see whether by studying I may become less ignorant. This is my answer, and these are my feelings.

*My writing has never proceeded from any dictate of my own, (6) but a force beyond me; I can in truth say, “You have compelled me.” One thing, however, is true, so that I shall not deny it (first because it is already well known to all, and second because God has shown me His favor in giving me the greatest possible love of truth, even when it might count against me). For ever since the light of reason first dawned in me, my inclination to letters was marked by such passion and vehemence that neither the reprimands of others (for I have received many) nor reflections of my own (there have been more than a few) have sufficed to make me abandon my pursuit of this native impulse that God Himself bestowed on me. His Majesty knows why and to what end He did so, and He knows that I have prayed that He snuff out the light of my intellect, leaving only enough to keep His Law. For more than that is too much, some would say, in a woman; and there are even those who say that it is harmful. His Majesty knows too that, not achieving this, I have attempted to entomb my intellect together with my name and to sacrifice it to the One who gave it to me; and that no other motive brought me to the life of Religion, despite the fact that the exercises and companionship of a community were quite opposed to the tranquillity and free-

permitió, diciendo que era tentación, y si sería. Si yo pudiera pagaros algo de lo que os debo, Señora mía, creo que sólo os pagara en contaros esto, pues no ha salido de mi boca jamás, excepto para quien debió salir.* Pero quiero que con haberos franqueado de par en par las puertas de mi corazón, haciéndos patentés sus más sellados secretos, conozcáis que no desdice de mi confianza lo que debo a vuestra venerable persona
190 Y excesivos favores.

[7] *Prosiguiendo en * la narración de mi inclinación, de que os quiero dar entera noticia, digo que no había cumplido los tres años de mi edad cuando enviando mi madre a una hermana mía, mayor que yo, a que se enseñase a leer en una de las que llaman Amigas,* me llevó a mí tras ella el cariño y la travesura; y viendo que la daban lección, me encendí yo de manera en el deseo de saber leer, que engañando, a mi parecer, a la maestra, la dije que mi madre ordenaba me diese lección. Ella no lo creyó, porque no era creíble; pero, por complacer al donaire, me la dio. Proseguí yo en ir y ella prosiguió en enseñarme, ya no de burlas, porque la desengañó la experiencia; y supe leer en tan breve tiempo, que ya sabía cuando lo supo mi madre, a quien la maestra lo ocultó por darle el gusto por entero y recibir el galardón por junto; y yo lo callé, creyendo que me azotarían por haberlo hecho sin orden. Aún vive la que me enseñó (Dios la guarde), y puede testificarlo.

[8] *Acuérdome que en estos tiempos, siendo mi golosina la que es ordinaria en aquella edad, me abstenia de comer queso, porque oí decir que hacía rudos, y podía conmigo más el deseo de saber que el de comer, siendo éste tan poderoso en los niños. Teniendo yo después como seis o siete años, y sabiendo ya leer y escribir, con todas las otras habilidades de labores y costuras que deprenden las mujeres, oí decir que había Universidad y Escuelas en que se estudiaban las ciencias, en Méjico; y apenas lo oí cuando empecé a matar a mi madre con instantes e importunos ruegos sobre que, mudándome el traje, me enviase a Méjico, en casa de unos deudos que tenía, para estudiar y cursar la Universidad;* ella no lo quiso hacer, e hizo muy bien, pero yo despiqué el deseo en leer muchos libros varios que tenía mi abuelo, sin que bastasen castigos ni reprensiones a estorbarlo; de manera que cuando vine a Méjico, se

dom from disturbance required by my studious bent. And once in the community, the Lord knows – and in this world only he who needs must know it, does – what I did to try to conceal my name and renown from the public; he did not, however, allow me to do this, telling me it was temptation, and so it would have been. If I could repay any part of my debt to you, my Lady, I believe I might do so merely by informing you of this, for these words have never left my mouth save to that one to whom they must be said.* But having thrown wide the doors of my heart and revealed to you what is there under seal of secrecy, I want you to know that this confidence does not gainsay the respect I owe to your venerable person and excessive favors.

*To go on with * the narration of this inclination of mine, of which I wish to give you a full account: I declare I was not yet three years old when my mother sent off one of my sisters, older than I, to learn to read in one of those girls' schools that they call *Amigas*. * Affection and mischief carried me after her; and when I saw that they were giving her lessons, I so caught fire with the desire to learn that, deceiving the teacher (or so I thought!), I told her that my mother wanted her to teach me also. She did not believe this, for it was not to be believed; but to humor my whim she gave me lessons. I continued to go and she continued to teach me, though no longer in make-believe, for the experience undeceived her. I learned to read in such a short time that I already knew how by the time my mother heard of it. My teacher had kept it from my mother to give delight with a thing all done and to receive a prize for a thing done well. And I had kept still, thinking I would be whipped for having done this without permission. The woman who taught me (may God keep her) is still living, and she can vouch for what I say.

I remember that in those days, though I was as greedy for treats as children usually are at that age, I would abstain from eating cheese, because I heard tell that it made people stupid, and the desire to learn was stronger for me than the desire to eat – powerful as this is in children. Later, when I was six or seven years old and already knew how to read and write, along with all the other skills like embroidery and sewing that women learn, I heard that in Mexico City there were a University and Schools where they studied the sciences. As soon as I heard this I began to slay my poor mother with insistent and annoying pleas, begging her to dress me in men's clothes and send me to the capital, to the home of some relatives she had there, so that I could enter the University and study.* She refused, and was right in doing

admiraban, no tanto del ingenio, cuanto de la memoria y noticias que tenía en edad que parecía que apenas había tenido tiempo para aprender a hablar.

(9) Empecé a deprender gramática, en que creo no llegaron a veinte las lecciones que tomé,* y era tan intenso mi cuidado, que siendo así que en las mujeres —y más en tan florida juventud— es tan apreciable el adorno natural del cabello, yo me cortaba de él cuatro o seis dedos, midiendo hasta dónde llegaba antes, e imponiéndome ley de que si cuando volviere a crecer hasta allí no sabía tal o tal cosa que me había propuesto deprender en tanto que crecía, me lo había de volver a cortar en pena de la rudeza. Sucedió así que él crecía y yo no sabía lo propuesto, porque el pelo crecía aprisa y yo aprendía despacio, y con efecto le cortaba en pena de la rudeza: que no me parecía razón que estuviese vestida de cabellos cabeza que estaba tan desnuda de noticias, que era más apetecible adorno.

✶. Entérme religiosa, porque aunque conocía que tenía el estado cosas (de las accesorias hablo, no de las formales), muchas repugnantes a mi genio,* con todo, para la total negación que tenía al matrimonio,* era lo menos desproporcionado y lo más decente que podía elegir en materia de la seguridad que deseaba de mi salvación;* a cuyo primer respeto (como al fin más importante) cedieron y sujetaron la cerviz todas las impertinencias de mi genio, que eran de querer vivir sola; de no querer tener ocupación obligatoria que embarazase la libertad de mi estudio, ni rumor de comunidad que impidiese el sosegado silencio de mis libros. Esto me hizo vacilar algo en la determinación, hasta que alumbrándome personas doctas de que era tentación, la vencí con el favor divino, y tomé el estado que tan indignamente tengo. Pensé yo que huía de mí misma, pero ¡miserable de mí! trájeme a mí conmigo y traje mi mayor enemigo en esta inclinación, que no sé determinar si por prenda o castigo me dio el Cielo, pues de apagarse o embarazarse con tanto ejercicio que la religión tiene, reventaba como pólvora, y se verificaba en mí el *privatio est causa appetitus*.

(10) Volví (mal dije, pues nunca cesé!); proseguí, digo, a la estu-
diosa tarea (que para mí era descanso en todos los ratos que sobrababan a mi obligación) de leer y más leer, de estudiar y más estudiar, sin más maestro que los mismos libros. Ya se ve cuán

so; but I quenched my desire by reading a great variety of books that belonged to my grandfather, and neither punishments nor scoldings could prevent me. And so when I did go to Mexico City, people marveled not so much at my intelligence as at my memory and the facts I knew at an age when it seemed I had scarcely had time to learn to speak.

I began to study Latin, in which I believe I took fewer than twenty lessons.* And my interest was so intense, that although in women (and especially in the very bloom of youth) the natural adornment of the hair is so esteemed, I would cut off four to six fingerlengths of my hair, measuring how long it had been before. And I made myself a rule that if by the time it had grown back to the same length I did not know such and such a thing that I intended to study, then I would cut my hair off again to punish my dull-wittedness. And so my hair grew, but I did not yet know what I had resolved to learn, for it grew quickly and I learned slowly. Then I cut my hair right off to punish my dull-wittedness, for I did not think it reasonable that hair should cover a head that was so bare of facts — the more desirable adornment. I took the veil because, although I knew I would find in religious life many things that would be quite opposed to my character* (I speak of accessory rather than essential matters), it would, given my absolute unwillingness to enter into marriage,* be the least unfitting and the most decent state I could choose, with regard to the assurance I desired of my salvation.* For before this first concern (which is, at the last, the most important), all the impertinent little follies of my character gave way and bowed to the yoke. These were wanting to live alone and not wanting to have either obligations that would disturb my freedom to study or the noise of a community that would interrupt the tranquil silence of my books. These things made me waver somewhat in my decision until, being enlightened by learned people as to my temptation, I vanquished it with divine favor and took the state I so unworthily hold. I thought I was fleeing myself, but — woe is me! — I brought myself with me, and brought my greatest enemy in my inclination to study, which I know not whether to take as a Heaven-sent favor or as a punishment. For when snuffed out or hindered with every [spiritual] exercise known to Religion, it exploded like gunpowder; and in my case the saying "*privatio gives rise to appetite*" was proven true.

I went back (no, I spoke incorrectly, for I never stopped) — I went on, I mean, with my studious task (which to me was peace and rest in every moment left over when my duties were done) of read-

duro es estudiar en aquellos caracteres sin alma, careciendo de la voz viva y explicación del maestro; pues todo este trabajo sufría yo muy gustosa por amor de las letras. ¡Oh, si hubiese sido por amor de Dios, que era lo acertado, cuánto hubiera mercedo! Bien que yo procuraba elevarlo cuanto podía y dirigirlo a su servicio, porque el fin a que aspiraba era a estudiar Teología, * pareciéndome menguada inhabilidad, siendo católica, no saber todo lo que en esta vida se puede alcanzar, por medios naturales, de los divinos misterios; y que siendo monja y no seglar, debía, por el estado eclesiástico, profesar letras; y más siendo hija de un San Jerónimo y de una Santa Paula, que era degenerar de tan doctos padres ser idiota la hija. Esto me proponía yo de mí misma y me parecía razón; si no es que era (y eso es lo más cierto) lisonjear y aplaudir a mi propia inclinación, proponiéndola como obligatorio su propio gusto.

(11) *Con esto proseguí, dirigiendo siempre, como he dicho, los pasos de mi estudio a la cumbre de la Sagrada Teología; pareciéndome preciso, para llegar a ella, subir por los escalones de las ciencias y artes humanas; porque ¿cómo entenderá el estilo de la Reina de las Ciencias quien aun no sabe el de las ancias? ¿Cómo sin Lógica sabría yo los métodos generales y particulares con que está escrita la Sagrada Escritura? ¿Cómo sin Retórica entendería sus figuras, tropos y locuciones? ¿Cómo sin Física, * tantas cuestiones naturales de las naturalezas de los animales de los sacrificios, donde se simbolizan tantas cosas ya declaradas, y otras muchas que hay? ¿Cómo si el sanar Saúl al sonido del arpa de David fue virtud y fuerza natural de la música, o sobrenatural que Dios quiso poner en David? 290 ¿Cómo sin Aritmética se podrán entender tantos cómputos de años, de días, de meses, de horas, de hebdómadas tan misteriosas como las de Daniel, y otras para cuya inteligencia es necesario saber las naturalezas, concordancias y propiedades de los números? ¿Cómo sin Geometría se podrán medir el Arca Santa del Testamento y la Ciudad Santa de Jerusalén, cuyas misteriosas mensuras hacen un cubo con todas sus dimensiones, y aquel repartimiento proporcional de todas sus partes tan maravilloso? ¿Cómo sin Arquitectura, el gran Templo de Salomón, donde fue el mismo Dios el artífice que dio la dis-

ing and still more reading, study and still more study, with no teacher besides my books themselves. What a hardship it is to learn from those lifeless letters, deprived of the sound of a teacher's voice and explanations; yet I suffered all these trials most gladly for the love of learning. Oh, if only this had been done for the love of God, as was rightful, think what I should have merited! Nevertheless I did my best to elevate these studies and direct them to His service, for the goal to which I aspired was the study of Theology. * Being a Catholic, I thought it an abject failing not to know everything that can in this life be achieved, through earthly methods, concerning the divine mysteries. And being a nun and not a laywoman, I thought I should, because I was in religious life, profess the study of letters—the more so as the daughter of such as St. Jerome and St. Paula: for it would be a degeneracy for an idiot daughter to proceed from such learned parents. I argued in this way to myself, and I thought my own argument quite reasonable. However, the fact may have been (and this seems most likely) that I was merely flattering and encouraging my own inclination, by arguing that its own pleasure was an obligation. 300

* I went on in this way, always directing each step of my studies, as I have said, toward the summit of Holy Theology, but it seemed to me necessary to ascend by the ladder of the humane arts and sciences in order to reach it; for who could fathom the style of the Queen of Sciences without knowing that of her handmaidens? Without Logic, how should I know the general and specific methods by which Holy Scripture is written? Without Rhetoric, how should I understand its figures, tropes, and locutions? Or how, without Physics or Natural Science, * understand all the questions that naturally arise concerning the varied natures of those animals offered in sacrifice, in which a great many things already made manifest are symbolized, and many more besides? How should I know whether Saul's cure at the sound of David's harp was owing to a virtue and power that is natural in Music or owing, instead, to a supernatural power that God saw fit to bestow on David? How without Arithmetic might one understand all those mysterious reckonings of years and days and months and hours and weeks that are found in Daniel and elsewhere, which can be comprehended only by knowing the natures, concordances, and properties of numbers? Without Geometry, how could we take the measure of the Holy Ark of the Covenant or the Holy City of Jerusalem, each of whose mysterious measurements forms a perfect cube uniting their dimensions, and each displaying that most marvelous distribution of the proportions of every part? 320

300 posición y la traza, y el Sabio Rey sólo fue sobrestante que la ejecutó; donde no había basa sin misterio, columna sin símbolo, cornisa sin alusión, arquitrabe sin significado; y así de otras sus partes, sin que el más mínimo filete estuviere sólo por el servicio y complemento del Arte, sino simbolizando cosas mayores? ¿Cómo sin grande conocimiento de reglas y partes de que consta la Historia se entenderán los libros históricos? * Aquellas recapitulaciones en que muchas veces se postpone en la narración lo que en el hecho sucedió primero. ¿Cómo sin grande noticia de ambos Derechos * podrán entenderse los libros legales? * ¿Cómo sin grande erudición tantas cosas de historias profanas, de que hace mención la Sagrada Escritura; tantas costumbres de gentiles, tantos ritos, tantas maneras de hablar? ¿Cómo sin muchas reglas y lección de Santos Padres se podrá entender la oscura locución de los Profetas? Pues sin ser muy perito en la Música, ¿cómo se entenderán aquellas proporciones musicales y sus primores que hay en tantos lugares, especialmente en aquellas peticiones que hizo a Dios Abraham, por las Ciudades, * de que si perdonaría habiendo cincuenta justos, y de este número bajó a cuarenta y cinco, que es sesquiquina y es como de mi a re; de aquí a cuarenta, que es sesquioctava y es como de re a mi; de aquí a treinta, que es sesquitercia, que es la del diatesaron; de aquí a veinte, que es la proporción sesquiáltera, que es la del diapente; de aquí a diez, que es la dupla, que es el diapasón; y como no hay más proporciones armónicas no pasó de ahí? Pues ¿cómo se podrá entender esto sin Música? * Allá en el Libro de Job le dice Dios: *Numquid coniungere valebis micantes stellas Pleiadas, aut gyrum Arcturi poteris dissipare? Numquid producis Luciferum in tempore suo, et Vesperum super filios terrae consurgere facis?*, cuyos términos, sin noticia de Astrología, será imposible entender. Y no sólo estas nobles ciencias; pero no hay arte mecánica que no se mencione. Y en fin, cómo el Libro * que comprende todos los libros, y la Ciencia * en que se incluyen todas las ciencias, para cuya inteligencia todas sirven; y después de saberlas todas (que ya se ve que no es fácil, ni aun posible) pide otra circunstancia más que todo lo dicho, que es una continua oración y pureza de vida, para impetrar de Dios aquella purgación de ánimo e iluminación de mente que es menester

Without the science of Architecture, how understand the mighty Temple of Solomon – where God Himself was the Draftsman who set forth His arrangement and plan, and the Wise King was but the overseer who carried it out; where there was no foundation without its mystery, nor column without its symbol, nor cornice without its allusion, nor architrave without its meaning, and likewise for every other part, so that even the very least fillet served not only for the support and enhancement of Art, but to symbolize greater things? How, without a thorough knowledge of the order and divisions by which History is composed, is one to understand the Historical Books * – as in those summaries, for example, which often postpone in the narration what happened first in fact? How, without command of the two branches of Law, * should one understand the Books of Law? * Without considerable erudition, how should we understand the great many matters of profane history that are mentioned by Holy Scripture: all the diverse customs of the Gentiles, all their rituals, all their manners of speech? Without knowing many precepts and reading widely in the Fathers of the Church, how could one understand the obscure sayings of the Prophets? Well then, and without being expert in Music, how might one understand those musical intervals and their perfections that occur in a great many passages – especially in Abraham's petitions to God on behalf of the Cities, * beseeching God to spare them if there were found fifty righteous people within? And the number fifty Abraham reduced to forty-five, which is sesquiquinal [10 to 9] or like the interval from mi to re; this in turn he reduced to forty, which is the sesquioctave [9 to 8] or like the interval from re to mi; thence he went down to thirty, which is sesquitercia, or the interval of the diatesaron [the perfect fourth]; thence to twenty, the sesquiáltera or the diapente [the fifth]; thence to ten, the duple, which is the diapasón [the interval and consonance of the octave]; and because there are no more harmonic intervals, Abraham went no further. How could all this be understood without knowledge of Music? * Why, in the very Book of Job, God says to him: "*Shalt thou be able to join together the shining stars the Pleiades; or canst thou stop the turning about of Arcturus? Canst thou bring forth the day star in its time, and make the evening star to rise upon the children of the earth?*" Without knowledge of Astronomy, these terms would be impossible to understand. Nor are these noble sciences alone represented; indeed, not one of the mechanical arts escapes mention. In sum, we see how this Book * contains all books, and this Science * includes all sciences, all of which serve that She may

para la inteligencia de cosas tan altas; y si esto falta, nada sirve de lo demás.

(12) Del Angélico Doctor Santo Tomás dice la Iglesia estas palabras: *In difficultatibus locorum Sacrae Scripturae ad orationem ieiunium adhibebat. Quin etiam sodali suo Fratri Reginaldo dicere solebat, quidquid sciret, non tam studio, aut labore suo peperisse, quam divinitus trahitum accepisse.* Pues yo, tan distante de la virtud y las letras, ¿cómo había de tener ánimo para escribir? Y así por tener algunos principios granjeados, estudiaba continuamente diversas cosas, sin tener para alguna particular inclinación, sino para todas en general; por lo cual, el haber estudiado en unas más que en otras, no ha sido en mí elección, sino que el acaso de haber topado más a mano libros de aquellas facultades les ha dado, sin arbitrio mío, la preferencia. Y como no tenía interés que me moviese, ni límite de tiempo que me estrechase el continuado estudio de una cosa por la necesidad de los grados, casi a un tiempo estudiaba diversas cosas o dejaba unas por otras; bien que en eso observaba orden, porque a unas llamaba estudio y a otras diversión; y en éstas descansaba de las otras: de donde se sigue que he estudiado muchas cosas y nada sé, porque las unas han embarazado a las otras. Es verdad que esto digo de la parte práctica en la que la tienen, porque claro está que mientras se mueve la pluma descansa el compás y mientras se toca el arpa sosiega el órgano, *et sic de caeteris*; porque como es menester mucho uso corporal para adquirir hábito, nunca le puede tener perfecto quien se reparte en varios ejercicios; pero en lo formal y especulativo sucede al contrario, y quisiera yo persuadir a todos con mi experiencia a que no sólo no estorban, pero se ayudan dando luz y abriendo camino las unas para las otras, por variaciones y ocultos engarces —que para esta cadena universal les puso la sabiduría de su Autor—, de manera que parece se corresponden y están unidas con admirable trabazón y concierto. Es la cadena que fingieron los antiguos que salía de la boca de Júpiter, * de donde pendían todas las cosas eslabonadas unas con otras. Así la demuestra el R. P. Atanasio Quirquerio en su curioso libro *De Magnete*. Todas las cosas salen de Dios, que es el centro a un tiempo y la circunferencia de donde salen y donde paran todas las líneas criadas.

be understood. And once each science is mastered (which we see is not easy, or even possible), She demands still another condition beyond all I have yet said, which is continual prayer and purity of life, to entreat God for that cleansing of the spirit and illumination of the mind required for an understanding of such high things. And if this be lacking, all the rest is useless.

The Church says these words of the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas: "At the difficult passages of Holy Scripture, he added fasting to prayer. And he used to say to his companion Brother Reginald that he owed all his knowledge not so much to study or hard work, but rather he had received it from God." How then should I, so far from either virtue or learning, find the courage to write? And so, to acquire a few basic principles of knowledge, I studied constantly in a variety of subjects, having no inclination toward any one of them in particular but being drawn rather to all of them generally. Therefore, if I have studied some things more than others it has not been by my choice, but because by chance the books on certain subjects came more readily to hand, and this gave preference to those topics, without my passing judgment in the matter. I held no particular interest to spur me, nor had I any limit to my time compelling me to reduce the continuous study of one subject, as is required in taking a degree. Thus almost at one sitting I would study diverse things or leave off some to take up others. Yet even in this I maintained a certain order, for some subjects I called my study and others my diversion, and with the latter I would take my rest from the former. Hence, I have studied many things but know nothing, for one subject has interfered with another. What I say is true regarding the practical element of those subjects that require practice, for clearly the compass must rest while the pen is moving, and while the harp is playing the organ is still, *and likewise with all things*. Much bodily repetition is needed to form a habit, and therefore a person whose time is divided among several exercises will never develop one perfectly. But in formal and speculative arts the opposite is true, and I wish I might persuade everyone with my own experience: to wit, that far from interfering, these subjects help one another, shedding light and opening a path from one to the next, by way of divergences and hidden links—for they were set in place so as to form this universal chain by the wisdom of their great Author. Thus it appears that they correspond each one to another and are united with a wondrous bond and harmonious agreement. This is the very chain the ancients believed to come forth from the mouth of Júpiter, * whence hung all things, each linked to the next. The Reverend

- (13) Yo de mí puedo asegurar que lo que no entiendo en un autor de una facultad, lo suelo entender en otro de otra que parece muy distante; y esos propios, al explicarse, abren ejemplos metafóricos de otras artes: como cuando dicen los lógicos que el medio se ha con los términos como se ha una medida con dos cuerpos distantes, para conferir si son iguales o no; y que la oración del lógico anda como la línea recta, por el camino más breve, y la del retórico se mueve, como la corva, por el más largo, pero van a un mismo punto los dos; y cuando dicen que los expositores * son como la mano abierta y los escolásticos * como el puño cerrado. Y así no es disculpa, ni por tal la doy, el haber estudiado diversas cosas, pues éstas antes se ayudan, sino que el no haber aprovechado ha sido ineptitud mía y debilidad de mi entendimiento, no culpa de la variedad. Lo que sí pudiera ser descargo mío es el sumo trabajo no sólo en carecer de maestro, * sino de discípulos con quienes conferir y ejercitar lo estudiado, teniendo sólo por maestro un libro mudo, por condiscípulo un tintero insensible; y en vez de explicación y ejercicio, muchos estorbos, no sólo los de mis religiosas obligaciones (que éstas ya se sabe cuán útil y provechosamente gastan el tiempo) sino de aquellas cosas accesorias de una comunidad: como estar yo leyendo y anotándose en la celda vecina tocar y cantar; estar yo estudiando y pelear dos criadas y venirme a constituir juez de su pendencia; estar yo escribiendo y venir una amiga a visitarme, haciéndome muy mala obra con muy buena voluntad, donde es preciso no sólo admitir el embarazo, pero quedar agradecida del perjuicio. Y esto es continuamente, porque como los ratos que destino a mi estudio son los que sobran de lo regular de la comunidad, esos mismos les sobran a las otras para venirme a estorbar; y sólo saben cuánta verdad es ésta los que tienen experiencia de vida común, donde sólo la fuerza de la vocación puede hacer que mi natural esté gustoso, y el mucho amor que hay entre mí y mis amadas hermanas, que como el amor es unión, no hay para él extremos distantes.
- (14) En esto sí confieso que ha sido inexplicable mi trabajo; y así no puedo decir lo que con envidia oigo a otros: que no les ha costado afán el saber. ¡Dichosos ellos! A mí, no el saber (que aún no sé), sólo el desear saber me le ha costado tan grande

Athanasius Kircher demonstrates this in his curious book *On the Magnet*. All things proceed from God, who is at once the center and circumference, whence all lines are begotten and where they have their end.

For my part, I can say with certainty that what I do not understand in one author on a certain subject, I usually understand in another author who treats what appears to be a very distant subject. And in turn these very authors, once understood, can unlock the metaphorical examples employed in still other arts: as when the logicians say, to compare whether terms are equal, that the middle term is to the major and minor terms as a measuring rod is to two distant bodies; or that the argument of the logician moves like a straight line by the shortest path, while that of the rhetorician moves like a curved line by the longest path, but both end at last at the same point; or when it is said that the Expositors * are like an open hand, while the Scholastics * are like a closed fist. And thus it serves as no excuse, nor do I intend it as such, that I have studied diverse things, for indeed these aid one another. Rather, my lack of profit in it is the fault of my ineptitude and the weakness of my mind, not the fault of variety. What could, however, serve to excuse me would be the great trial I have undergone in lacking not only a teacher, * but schoolfellows with whom to review and practice what had been studied. For my only teacher was a mute book, my only schoolfellow an unfeeling inkwell. And instead of explanations and exercises I had interruptions, posed not only by my religious duties (for it is well known how usefully and beneficially these take up one's time), but by all those other things incidental to life in a community: as when I would be reading and the nuns in the next cell would have a notion to sing and play; or I would be reading and two maidservants, arguing, would come to appoint me arbiter in their dispute; again, as I was writing, a friend would come to visit me, doing me a very bad turn with very good intentions, so that one must not only make way for the interruption but give thanks for the harm done. And it is always so, for the times I devote to study are usually those left over when observance of the Rule of the community is fulfilled, and the same time is left to the other nuns to come and interrupt me. The truth of this can be known only to those who have experienced life in community, where the strength of my vocation alone assures that my nature can find enjoyment, together with the great love that exists between me and my dear sisters. For as love itself is union, it admits no distant extremes.

que pudiera decir con mi Padre San Jerónimo (aunque no con su aprovechamiento): *Quid ibi laboris insumperim, quid sustinuerim difficultatis, quoties desperaverim, quotiesque cessaverim* 420 *et contentione discendi rursus inceperim, testis est conscientia, tam mea, qui passus sum, quam eorum qui mecum duxerunt vitam.* Menos los compañeros y testigos (que aun de ese alivio he carecido), lo demás bien puedo asegurar con verdad. ¡Y que haya sido tal esta mi negra inclinación, que todo lo haya vencido!

151 Solía sucederme que, como entre otros beneficios, debo a Dios un natural tan blando y tan afable y las religiosas me aman mucho por él (sin reparar, como buenas, en mis faltas) y con esto gustan mucho de mi compañía, conociendo esto y movida del grande amor que las tengo, con mayor motivo que a ellas a mí, gusto más de la suya: así, me solía ir los ratos que a unas y a otras nos sobraban, a consolarlas y recrearme con su conversación. * Reparé que en este tiempo hacía falta a mi estudio, y hacía voto de no entrar en celda alguna si no me obligase a ello la obediencia o la caridad: porque, sin este freno tan duro, al de sólo propósito le rompiera el amor; y este voto (conociendo mi fragilidad) le hacía por un mes o por quince días; y dando cuando se cumplía, un día o dos de treguas, lo volvía a renovar, sirviendo este día, no tanto a mi descanso (pues nunca lo ha sido para mí el no estudiar) cuanto a que no me tuviesen por áspera, retirada e ingrata al no merecido cariño de mis carísimas hermanas.

161 Bien se deja en esto conocer cuál es la fuerza de mi inclinación. Bendito sea Dios que guiso fuese hacia las letras y no hacia otro vicio, que fuera en mí casi insuperable; y bien se infiere también cuán contra la corriente han navegado (o por mejor decir, han naufragado) mis pobres estudios. Pues aún falta por referir lo más arduo de las dificultades; que las de hasta aquí sólo han sido estorbos obligatorios y casuales, que indirectamente lo son; y faltan los positivos que directamente han tirado a estorbar y prohibir el ejercicio. ¿Quién no creerá, viendo tan generales aplausos, * que he navegado viento en popa y mar en leche, sobre las palmas de las aclamaciones comunes? Pues Dios sabe que no ha sido muy así, porque entre las flores de esas mismas aclamaciones se han levantado y

In this respect, I do confess that the trial I have undergone has 144 been beyond all telling; and thus I cannot confirm what I have, with envy, heard others say: that learning has cost them no drudgery. How lucky they are! For me, it has not been knowledge [for I still know nothing] but the desire to know that has cost me so dear that I might truly say, like my good Father St. Jerome (though not with the benefit he offers): "*What efforts I spent on that task, what difficulties I had to face, how often I despaired, how often I gave up and then in my eagerness to learn began again, my own knowledge can witness from personal experience and those can testify who were then living with me.*" Save for the mention of companions and witnesses (for I have lacked even this mitigation), I can in all truth affirm the rest of his words. And to think that this, my wicked inclination, should be such, that it has vanquished all before it! It has often befallen me—for among other favors I owe to God a nature that is mild and affable; and the nuns, good creatures that they are, love me very much on this account and take no note of my failings, and so they delight in my company. Knowing this, and moved by the great love I bear them with more cause than theirs for me, I take even greater delight in their company. — And so, as I say, in the times they and I have not been occupied, I have often gone to offer them comfort and to find recreation in their conversation. * I began to notice that I was stealing this time away from my studies, and I made a vow not to step into another nun's cell unless I were thus obliged by obedience or charity to do so; for unless I reined myself in this harshly, love would burst the restraint exerted by my intent alone. Thus, knowing my own weakness, I would hold to this vow for a month or a fortnight; and when it was done, I gave myself a truce of a day or two before I renewed it. That day would serve not so much to give me rest (for to desist from study has never been restful for me), but so that I might not be thought gruff, withdrawn, and ungrateful in the face of the undeserved affection of my most beloved sisters.

*This shows all too well just how great is the strength of my 146 inclination. May God be praised that He inclined me to letters and not some other vice, which would have been, in my case, nearly insurmountable. And from this, too, it may well be inferred just how my poor studies have found their way (or, to be more exact, have foundered) in steering against the current. For I have yet to tell the most strenuous of my difficulties. Those accounted for to this point have been no more than hindrances caused by my obligations or by chance, posed indirectly; they are not purposeful obstacles directly aimed at impeding and prohibiting my

despertado tales áspides de emulaciones y persecuciones, cuantas no podré contar. Y los que más nocivos y sensibles para mí han sido, no son aquéllos que con declarado odio y malevolencia me han perseguido, sino los que amándome y deseando mi bien* (y por ventura, mercediendo mucho con Dios por la buena intención), me han mortificado y atormentado más que los otros, con aquel: *No conviene a la santa ignorancia que deben, este estudio; se ha de perder, se ha de desvanecer en tanta altura con su misma perspicacia y agudeza.* * ¿Qué me habrá costado resistir esto? ¡Rara especie de martirio donde yo era el mártir y me era el verdugo!*

(17) Pues por la — en mí dos veces infeliz* — habilidad de hacer versos, aunque fuesen sagrados, ¿qué pesadumbres no me han dado o cuáles no me han dejado de dar? Cierto, señora mía, 470 que algunas veces me pongo a considerar que el que se señala* — o le señala Dios, que es quien sólo lo puede hacer — es recibido como enemigo común, porque parece a algunos que usurpa los aplausos que ellos merecen o que hace estanco de las admiraciones a que aspiraban, y así le persiguen.

(18) Aquella ley políticamente bárbara de Atenas, por la cual salía desterrado de su república el que se señalaba en prendas y virtudes porque no tiranizase con ellas la libertad pública, todavía dura, todavía se observa en nuestros tiempos, aunque no hay ya aquel motivo de los atenenses; pero hay otro, no 480 menos eficaz aunque no tan bien fundado, pues parece máxima del impío Maquiavelo: que es aborrecer al que se señala porque desluce a otros. Así sucede y así sucedió siempre.

(19) *Y si no, ¿cuál fue la causa de aquel rabioso odio de los fariseos contra Cristo, habiendo tantas razones para lo contrario? Porque si miramos su presencia, * ¿cuál prenda más amable que aquella divina hermosura? ¿Cuál más poderosa para arrebatar los corazones? Si cualquiera belleza humana tiene jurisdicción sobre los albedrios y con blanda y apetecida violencia los sabe sujetar, ¿qué haría aquélla con tantas prerrogati- 490 vas y dotes soberanos? ¿Qué haría, qué movería y qué no haría y qué no movería aquella incomprendible beldad, por cuyo hermoso rostro, como por un terso cristal se estaban transparentando los rayos de la Divinidad? ¿Qué no movería aquel semblante, que sobre incomparables perfecciones en lo

training. Who would not think, upon hearing such widespread applause, * that I had sailed before the wind with a sea smooth as glass, upon the cheers of universal acclaim? Yet God Himself knows it has not quite been so, because among the blossoms of that very acclaim there have roused themselves and reared up the asps of rivalry and persecution, more than I could possibly count. And the most venomous and hurtful to me have not been those who with explicit hatred and ill-will have persecuted me, but those persons, loving me and desiring my good* (and, therefore, greatly deserving before God for their good intentions), who have mortified and tormented me more than any others, with these words: "All this study is not fitting, for holy ignorance is your duty; she shall go to perdition, she shall surely be cast down from such heights by that same wit and cleverness."* How was I to bear up against this? A strange martyrdom indeed, where I must be both martyr and my own executioner!*

Well, as for this aptitude at composing verses — which is doubtly unfortunate, * in my case, even should they be sacred verses — what unpleasantness have they not caused me, and indeed do they not still cause? Truly, my Lady, at times I ponder how it is that a person who achieves high significance* — or rather, who is granted significance by God, for He alone can do this — is received as the common enemy. For that person seems to others to usurp the applause they deserve or to draw off and dam up the admiration to which they had aspired, and so they persecute that person.

That politically barbarous law of Athens remains in effect, 18) whereby anyone possessing significant qualities and virtues was expelled from the republic to prevent his using them for the subjugation of public liberty; it is still observed in our own times, though no longer for the same reason the Athenians held. But now there is another motive, no less potent though less well founded, for it resembles a maxim of that impious Machiavelli: to abhor the person who becomes significant because that one tarnishes the fame of others.

*What else but this could cause that furious hatred of the Pharisees against Christ, when there were so many reasons to feel the opposite? If we consider Christ's bodily form, * what quality could be more worthy of love than His divine beauty? What could bear off our hearts more powerfully? For if any human beauty whatsoever can hold sway over our fancies and enthral them with gentle and ravishing force, then what indeed might that other beauty accomplish, with so many sovereign powers and perfections? What could it do and move us to do, what could it not do

humano, señalaba iluminaciones de divino? Si el de Moisés, de sólo la conversación con Dios, era intolerable * a la flaqueza de la vista humana, ¿qué sería el del mismo Dios humano? Pues si vamos a las demás prendas, ¿cuál más amable que aquella celestial modesta, que aquella suavidad y blandura derramando misericordias en todos sus movimientos, aquella profunda humildad y mansedumbre, aquellas palabras de vida eterna y eterna sabiduría? Pues ¿cómo es posible que esto no les arrebatara las almas, que no fuesen enamorados y elevados tras él?

[20] Dice la Santa Madre y madre mía Teresa, * que después que vio la hermosura de Cristo quedó libre de poderse inclinar a criatura alguna, porque ninguna cosa veía que no fuese fealdad, comparada con aquella hermosura. Pues ¿cómo en los hombres hizo tan contrarios efectos? Y ya que como toscos y viles no tuvieran conocimiento ni estimación de sus perfecciones, siguiera como interesantes ¿no les moviera sus propias conveniencias y utilidades en tantos beneficios como les hacía, sanando los enfermos, resucitando los muertos, curando los endemoniados? Pues ¿cómo no le amaban? ¡Ay Dios, que por eso mismo no le amaban, por eso mismo le aborrecían! Así lo justificaron ellos mismos.

[21] Juntanse en su concilio y dicen: *Quid facimus, quia hic homo multa signa facit?* ¿Hay tal causa? Si dijeran: éste es un malhechor, un transgresor de la ley, un alborotador que con engaños alborota el pueblo, mintieran, como mintieron cuando lo decían; pero eran causas más congruentes a lo que solicitaban, que era quitarle la vida; mas dar por causal que hace cosas señaladas, no parece de hombres doctos, cuales eran los fariseos. Pues así es, que cuando se apasionan los hombres doctos prorrumpen en semejantes inconsecuencias. En verdad que sólo por eso salió determinado que Cristo muriese. Hombres, si es que así se os puede llamar, siendo tan brutos, ¿por qué es esa tan cruel determinación? No responden más sino que *multa signa facit*. ¡Valgame Dios, que el hacer cosas señaladas es causa para que uno muera! Haciendo reclamamos este *multa signa facit* a aquel: *radix lesse, qui stat in signum populorum*. Y al otro: *in signum cui contradicetur*. ¿Por pues signo? ¡Pues muera! ¿Señalado? ¡Pues padezca, que eso es el premio de quien se señala!

or fail to move us to do, that unfathomable beauty through whose fair face, as through a polished glass, there shone unclouded the brilliant beams of Divinity? What could that countenance not inspire, in which far beyond incomparable human perfections there shone luminous signs of divine radiance? If the face of Moses, after no more than a conversation with God, became intolerable * to the frailty of human sight, what must occur with the very face of God Himself made human? And if we go on to His other qualities, what could be more worthy of love than that heavenly modesty, that gentle softness pouring out mercies in all His movements, that depth of humility and meekness, those words of eternal life and eternal wisdom? Then how could this fail to bear off every soul? How could any fail to follow, loving and uplifted, behind Him?

✠Our Holy Mother, my own mother Teresa, * says that from the time she beheld the beauty of Christ she was freed of the possibility of inclination toward any earthly creature, for she could see nothing that was not ugliness compared to such beauty. Then how could it work such opposite effects in men? And since, being crude and base men, they could form no understanding nor measure of His perfections, why then in mere self-interest were they not moved by their own advantage and by the profit to them entailed in the many benefits He proffered, when He made the sick healthy, revived the dead, and cast out devils from those possessed? How then could they not love Him? Dear God, it was for this very reason they did not love Him. It was for this that they despised him!

They gathered in their council and declared: "What do we, for this man doth many miracles?" Can such a thing be cause for accusation? If they had said, "This man is a malefactor, a transgressor against the law, a troublemaker who with his deceptions stirs up the people," they would have lied; indeed, they did lie when they said those very things. Yet those accusations at least presented cause more suited to the end they proposed, which was to take His life. No, to state as cause that He worked miracles seems unfitting in learned men, and such were the Pharisees. But this is the way of things, for when learned men fall prey to passion they burst out illogically in just this fashion. In truth, it was concluded for this reason alone that Christ must die. O men—if such you may be called, being so brutish—why do you reach such a cruel decision? They answer only, "He doth many miracles." May God preserve me if working signs and miracles is cause that one should die! This saying, "He doth signs and miracles" calls forth that earli-

(121) *Suelen en la eminencia de los templos colocarse por ador-
no unas figuras de los Vientos y de la Fama, y por defenderlas
de las aves, las llenan todas de púas; defensa parece y no es
sino propiedad forzosa: no puede estar sin púas que la pun-
cen quien está en alto. Allí está la ojeriza del aire; allí es el
540 rigor de los elementos; allí despican la cólera los rayos; allí es
el blanco de piedras y flechas. ¡Oh infeliz altura, expuesta a
tantos riesgos! ¡Oh signo que te ponen por blanco de la envidia
y por objeto de la contradicción! Cualquiera eminencia, ya sea
de dignidad, ya de nobleza, ya de riqueza, ya de hermosura,
ya de ciencia, padece esta pensión; pero la que con más rigor
la experimenta es la del entendimiento. Lo primero, porque
es el más indefenso, pues la riqueza y el poder castigan a quien
se les atreve, y el entendimiento no, pues mientras es mayor
es más modesto y sufrido y se defiende menos. Lo segundo
550 es porque, como dijo doctamente Gracián, las ventajas en el
entendimiento lo son en el ser. * No por otra razón es el ángel
más que el hombre que porque entiende más; no es otro el
exceso que el hombre hace al bruto, sino sólo entender; y así
como ninguno quiere ser menos que otro, así ninguno confiesa
que otro entienda mas, porque es consecuencia del ser más.
Sufrirá uno y confesará que otro es más noble que él, que es
más rico, que es más hermoso y aun que es más docto; pero
que es más entendido apenas habrá quien lo confiese: *Rarus*
560 *est, qui veliti cedere ingenio*. Por eso es tan eficaz la batería con-
tra esta prenda.

(123) *Cuando los soldados hicieron burla, entretenimiento y
diversión de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo, trajeron una púrpura
vieja y una caña hueca y una corona de espinas para coronarle
por rey de burlas. Pues ahora, la caña y la púrpura eran afren-
tosas, pero no dolorosas; pues ¿por qué sólo la corona es doloro-
sa? No basta que, como las demás insignias, fuese de escarnio
e ignominia, pues ése era el fin? No, porque la sagrada cabeza
de Cristo y aquel divino cerebro eran depósito de la sabidur-
570 fa; y cerebro sabio en el mundo no basta que esté escarneci-
do, ha de estar también lastimado y maltratado; cabeza que
es erario de sabiduría no espere otra corona que de espinas.
¿Cuál guirnalda espera la sabiduría humana si ve la que obtu-
vo la divina? Coronaba la soberbia romana las diversas hazañas

er "root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of the people" and that
other "for a sign which shall be contradicted." For a sign? Then let
him die! Of significance? He must suffer, for that is the prize given
one who is thought significant!

*Figures of the Winds and of Fame are often placed on the top- (122)
most heights of temples as adornments; to defend them from the
birds, these images are covered with bars. This would seem to
be a defense, yet it is not, but rather a requisite attribute; for a
figure thus standing on high must needs feel those bars. Up there
are felt the grudges of the wind, the severity of the elements. There
the rage of the lightning thrusts. Up there is the target of stones
and arrows. O, unhappy eminence, exposed to so many risks! O
sign and symbol, set on high as a target of envy and an object
to be spoken against! These are the wages suffered by eminence,
whether of dignity, or nobility, or wealth, or beauty, or learning;
but it is high intelligence that experiences all this with greatest
force. For in the first place, intelligence lacks defense: wealth and
power punish those who confront them, while intelligence does
not. Indeed, the greater it is, the more modest and long-suffering
intelligence becomes and defends itself less. Secondly, this is be-
cause, as Gracián said with great erudition, "The advantages of
intelligence are advantages of being..." * The angel is superior to
man for no other reason than that the angel is more intelligent;
man surpasses the beast in no other way but intelligence. And
thus, as no one wants to be less than another, no one will admit
that another is more intelligent, for that follows logically from the
other's being more. One will suffer the admission that another is
nobler than himself, wealthier, more beautiful, and even more
learned; but there are few indeed who will admit that another
possesses superior powers of mind: "It is the rare man who will con-
cede greater intelligence [to his friend]." That is why weaponry is
so effective against this particular talent.

*When the soldiers made a mockery, an entertainment, and a (123)
diversion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, they brought an old purple
cloak and a hollow staff and a crown of thorns to mock Him as
king of fools. Now, the cloak and staff were insulting, but they
580 did not cause pain. Why should the crown alone be painful? Was
it not enough that, like the other insignia, it should be an emblem
of scorn and mockery, since that was their aim? No, because the
sacred head of Christ and His divine mind were the storehouse
of wisdom. And in this world it is not enough that the wise mind
be scorned; it must needs be wounded and beaten. The head that
is a treasury of wisdom can hope for no other crown than thorns.

- de sus capitanes también con diversas coronas: ya con la civil
ca al que defendía al ciudadano; ya con la castrense al que en-
traba en los reales enemigos; ya con la mural al que escalaba
el muro; ya con la obsidional al que libraba la ciudad cercada
o el ejército sitiado o el campo o en los reales; ya con la naval,
ya con la oval, ya con la triunfal otras hazañas, según refieren
610 Plinio y Aulo Gelio; mas viendo yo tantas diferencias de coro-
nas, dudaba de cuál especie sería la de Cristo, y me parece que
fue obsidional, que (como sabéis, señoral) era la más honrosa
y se llamaba obsidional de *obsidio*, que quiere decir cerco; la
cual no se hacía de oro ni de plata, sino de la misma grama
o yerba que cría el campo en que se hacía la empresa. Y como
la hazaña de Cristo fue hacer levantar el cerco al Príncipe de
las Tinieblas, el cual tenía situada toda la tierra, como lo dice
en el libro de Job: *Circuivi terram et ambulavi per eam* y de él
dice San Pedro: *Circuivit, quaerens quem devoret*; y vino nuestro
620 caudillo y le hizo levantar el cerco: *nunc princeps huius mundi
eicietur foras*, así los soldados le coronaron no con oro ni plata,
sino con el fruto natural que producía el mundo que fue el cam-
po de la lid, el cual, después de la maldición, *spinas et tribulos
germinabit tibi*, no producía otra cosa que espinas; y así fue
propísima corona de ellas en el valeroso y sabio vencedor con
que le coronó su madre la Sinagoga; * saliendo a ver el doloro-
so triunfo, como al del otro Salomón festivas, a éste llorosas
las hijas de Sión, * porque es el triunfo de sabio obtenido con
630 dolor y celebrado con llanto, que es el modo de triunfar la
sabiduría; siendo Cristo, como rey de ella, quien estrenó la co-
rona, porque santificada en sus sienes, se quite el horror a los
otros sabios y entiendan que no han de aspirar a otro honor.
640 Quiso la misma Vida ir a dar la vida a Lázaros difunto; * ig-
noraban los discípulos el intento y le replicaron: *Rabbi, nunc
quaerebant te Iudaei lapidare, et iterum vadis illuc?* Satisfizo el
Redentor el temor: *Nome duodecim sunt horae diei?* Hasta aquí,
parece que tenían porque tenían el antecedente de quererle
apedrear porque les había reprendido llamándoles ladrones y
no pastores de las ovejas. Y así, tenían que si iba a lo mismo
610 (como las reprensiones, aunque sean tan justas, suelen ser mal
reconocidas), corriese peligro su vida; pero ya desengañados
y enterados de que va a dar vida a Lázaros, ¿cuál es la razón

What wreath can human learning hope for if it sees what is be-
stowed on the divine? Roman pomp crowned the varied feats of
their captains with crowns that were equally varied: the civic 630
crown to one who saved the life of a fellow citizen; the castrense
crown to one who stormed the enemy's camps; the mural
crown to one who scaled the walls; the obsidional crown to one
who freed the besieged city, an encircled army, or the battlefield
or encampment. They rewarded other feats with the naval crown,
the oval crown, and the triumphal crown, according to Pliny and
Aulus Gellius. But upon seeing so many and diverse crowns, I
pondered which sort the crown given to Christ might be; and I
think it must be the obsidional crown, which (as you know, my
Lady) conferred the greatest honor and was called "obsidional" 640
from *obsidio*, which means "siege." This crown was made neither
of gold nor silver, but of the very grasses growing in the field
where the brave deed was carried out. And Christ's feat was to
raise the siege of the Prince of Darkness, who had encircled the
entire earth, as Satan himself says in the Book of Job: "I have gone
round about the earth, and walked through it"; and as St. Peter says
of him: "Your adversary [the devil] goeth about seeking whom he may
devour." And our Chieftain came, and made Satan raise the siege:
"Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Thus, the soldiers
crowned Him with neither gold nor silver, but with the plant 650
springing up throughout the world, which was their field of bat-
tle. For after the curse, "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to
thee," this world produced nothing but thorns. And so it was meet
and right that His Mother the Synagogue * should crown the brave
and wise conquerer with those very thorns. The daughters of Zion
went out weeping to see this sorrowful triumph, * as they went
gaily to see Solomon triumphant; for the triumph of the wise is
won with sorrow and celebrated with tears. This is the way that
wisdom triumphs. It was Christ the King of Wisdom who first
wore that crown, so that seeing it sanctified upon His brow, all 660
other men of learning might lose their horror of it, and know they
need aspire to no other honor.

Our very Life saw fit to go and give new life to dead Lazarus. * 624
The disciples did not know what he intended, and they argued
with Him: "Rabbi, the Jews but now sought to stone thee: and goest
thou thither again?" And the Redeemer made full reply to their fore-
boding: "Are there not twelve hours of the day?" Up to this point in
the text, it seems the disciples were afraid because they bore in
mind the precedent that some had tried to stone Him because He
had rebuked them, calling them thieves and not shepherds of 670

que pudo mover a Tomás para que tomando aquí los alientos que en el huerto Pedro: *Eamus et nos, ut moriamur cum eo.* ¿Qué dices, apóstol santo? A morir no va el Señor, ¿de qué es el recelo? Porque a lo que Cristo va no es a reprender, sino a hacer una obra de piedad, y por esto no le pueden hacer mal. Los mismos judíos* os podían haber asegurado, pues cuando los reconvinó queriéndole apedrear: *Multa bona opera ostendi vobis ex patre meo, propter quod eorum opus me lapidatis?*, le respondieron: *De bono opere non lapidamus te, sed de blasphemia.* Pues si ellos dicen que no le quieren apedrear por las buenas obras y ahora va a hacer una tan buena como dar la vida a Lázaro, ¿de qué es el recelo o por qué? ¿No fuera mejor decir: Vamos a gozar el fruto del agradecimiento de la buena obra que va a hacer nuestro Maestro: a verle aplaudir y rendir gracias al beneficio; a ver las admiraciones que hacen del milagro? Y no decir, al parecer una cosa tan fuera del caso como es: *Eamus et nos, ut moriamur cum eo.* Mas ¡ay! que el Santo temió como discreto y habló como apóstol. ¿No va Cristo a hacer un milagro? Pues ¿qué mayor peligro? Menos intolerable es para la soberbia oír las reprensiones, que para la envidia ver los milagros. En todo lo dicho, venerable señora, no quiero [ni tal desatino cupiera en mí] decir que me han perseguido por saber, sino sólo porque he tenido amor a la sabiduría y a las letras, no porque haya conseguido ni uno ni otro.*

(25) Hallábase el Príncipe de los Apóstoles, en un tiempo, tan distante de la sabiduría como pondera aquel enfático: *Petrus vero sequebatur eum a longe*; tan lejos de los aplausos de docto quien tenía el título de indiscreto: *Nesciens quid diceret*; y aun examinado del conocimiento de la sabiduría dijo él mismo que no había alcanzado la menor noticia: *Mulier, nescio quid dicis. Mulier, non novi illum.* Y ¿qué le sucede? Que teniendo estos créditos de ignorante, no tuvo la fortuna, sí las aflicciones, de sabio. ¿Por qué? No se dio otra causal sino: *Et hic cum illo erat.* Era afecto a la sabiduría. Llegábale el corazón, andábase tras ella, preciábase de seguidor y amoroso de la sabiduría; y aunque era tan *a longe* que no le comprendía ni alcanzaba, bastó para incurrir sus tormentos. Ni faltó soldado de fuera que no le afligiese, ni mujer doméstica que no le aquejase.* Yo confieso que me hallo muy distante de los términos de la sabiduría y

flocks. And so the disciples feared that if He went back to do the same thing [as rebukes, however just they may be, tend to be ill-received], He would be in danger of His life. But once disabused of the error—knowing that He was going to restore life to Lazarus—what could then stir Thomas, taking courage just as Peter did in the garden, to say: “*Let us also go, that we may die with Him?*” What are you saying, blessed Apostle? The Lord does not go to die; then what is your misgiving? For Christ goes not to rebuke but to perform an act of mercy, and they can do no ill to Him for that. The Jews themselves* could have assured you of this. For when He reproached them for wanting to stone Him, saying, “*Many good works I have shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do you stone me?*” they answered Him: “*For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy.*” If the Jews declare that they do not wish to stone Him for good works, and if now He goes to work such great good as to give new life to Lazarus, on what account or to what purpose do you feel such misgiving? Would you not better say, “*Let us go taste the fruits of gratitude for the good work our Master will perform; let us go see Him praised and thanked for the favor He gives; let us see how they marvel at His miracle,*” rather than saying a thing so apparently out of place as “*Let us also go, that we may die with Him?*” But alas, our Saint had the fears of a wise man, and he spoke like a true apostle. Does Christ not set out to work a miracle, a sign? Well then, what greater danger can He risk? Less intolerable is it for pride to hear itself rebuked than for envy to see miracles performed. In all that I have said, my Lady, I do not wish [nor would I be capable of such foolishness] to claim that I have been persecuted because of my knowledge, but rather only because of my love for learning and letters, and not because I had attained either one or the other.*

The Prince of the Apostles once found himself a long way in- (25) ded from Knowledge, as is remarked in the emphatic “*But Peter followed afar off.*” A long way from receiving praise as a learned man was he, who once bore the title of unknowing: “*not knowing what he said.*” And indeed, when faced with an examination concerning his acquaintance with Knowledge, he himself said he had not acquired the least notion: “*Woman, I know not what thou sayest. Woman, I am not [one of them].*” And what befalls him? Possessing this reputation for ignorance, he reaps none of the rewards but suffers all the afflictions of the learned. And why? No other reason is given, save: “*This man also was with him.*” Peter was fond of Knowledge, which bore away his heart; and he followed after,

que la he deseado seguir, aunque a *longe*. Pero todo ha sido acercarme más al fuego de la persecución, al crisol del tormento; y ha sido con tal extremo que han llegado a solicitar que se me prohiba el estudio.*

[26] Una vez lo consiguieron con una prelada muy santa y muy cándida que creyó que el estudio era cosa de Inquisición y me mandó que no estudiase.* Yo la obedecí (unos tres meses que duró el poder ella mandar) en cuanto a no tomar libro, que en cuanto a no estudiar absolutamente, como no cae debajo de mi potestad, no lo pude hacer, porque aunque no estudiaba en los libros, estudiaba en todas las cosas que Dios crió, sirviéndome ellas de letras; y de libro toda esta máquina universal.* Nada veía sin reflejar; nada oía sin consideración, aun en las cosas más menudas y materiales; porque como no hay criatura, por baja que sea, en que no se conozca el *me fecit Deus*, no hay alguna que no pasmé el entendimiento, si se considera como se debe. Así yo, vuelvo a decir, las miraba y admiraba todas; de tal manera que de las mismas personas con quienes hablaba, y de lo que me decían, me estaban resaltando mil consideraciones: ¿De dónde emanaría aquella variedad de genios e ingenios,* siendo todos de una especie? ¿Cuáles serían los temperamentos y ocultas cualidades que lo ocasionaban? Si veía una figura, estaba combinando la proporción de sus líneas y mediándola con el entendimiento y reduciéndola a otras diferentes. Paseábame algunas veces en el testero de un dormitorio nuestro (que es una pieza muy capaz) y estaba observando que siendo las líneas de sus dos lados paralelas y su techo a nivel, la vista fingía que sus líneas se inclinaban una a otra y que su techo estaba más bajo en lo distante que en lo próximo: de donde infería que las líneas visuales corren rectas, pero no paralelas, sino que van a formar una figura piramidal. Y discurría si sería ésta la razón que obligó a los antiguos a dudar si el mundo era esférico o no. Porque, aunque lo parece, podía ser engaño de la vista, demostrando concavidades donde pudiera no haberlas.

[27] Este modo de reparos en todo me sucedía y sucede siempre, sin tener yo arbitrio en ello, que antes me suelo enfadar por que me cansa la cabeza; y yo creía que a todos sucedía esto mismo y el hacer versos, hasta que la experiencia me ha mos-

calling himself a follower and a lover of Knowledge. And though he followed so "*afar off*" that he neither understood nor attained Knowledge, still this sufficed to incur its torments. The soldier from without would not hesitate to afflict him, nor the maid servant within-doors fail to trouble him.* I confess that I am far in debt from the terms of Knowledge and that I have wished to follow it, though "*afar off*." But all this has merely led me closer to the flames of persecution, the crucible of affliction; and to such extremes that some have even sought to prohibit me from study.*

They achieved this once, with a very saintly and simple mother superior who believed that study was an affair for the Inquisition and ordered that I should not read.* I obeyed her [for the three months or so that her authority over us lasted] in that I did not pick up a book. But with regard to avoiding study absolutely, as such a thing does not lie within my power, I could not do it. For although I did not study in books, I studied all the things that God created, taking them for my letters, and for my book all the intricate structures of this world.* Nothing could I see without reflecting upon it, nothing could I hear without pondering it, even to the most minute, material things. For there is no creature, however lowly, in which one cannot recognize the great "*God made me*"; there is not one that does not stagger the mind if it receives due consideration. And so, I repeat, I looked and marveled at all things, so that from the very persons with whom I spoke and from what they said to me, a thousand speculations leapt to my mind: Whence could spring this diversity of character and intelligence* among individuals all composing one single species? What temperaments, what hidden qualities could give rise to each? When I noticed a shape, I would set about combining the proportions of its lines and measuring it in my mind and converting it to other proportions. I sometimes walked back and forth along the fore-wall of one of our dormitories (which is a very large room), and I began to observe that although the lines of its two sides were parallel and the ceiling was flat, yet the eye falsely perceived these lines as though they approached each other and the ceiling as though it were lower in the distance than close by; from this I inferred that visual lines run straight, but not parallel, and that they form a pyramidal figure. And I conjectured whether this might be the reason the ancients were obliged to question whether the world is spherical or not. Because even though it seems so, this could be a delusion of the eye, displaying concavities where there were none.

This kind of observation has been continual in me and is so to

[27]

trado lo contrario; y es de tal manera esta naturaleza o costumbre, * que nada veo sin segunda consideración. Estaban en mi presencia dos niñas jugando con un trompo, y apenas yo vi el movimiento y la figura, cuando empecé, con esta mi locura, * a considerar el fácil moto de la forma esférica, y cómo duraba el impulso ya impreso e independiente de su causa, pues distante la mano de la niña, que era la causa motiva, bailaba el trompillo; y no contenta con esto, hice traer harina y certera para que, en bailando el trompo encima, se conociese si eran círculos perfectos o no los que describía con su movimiento; y hallé que no eran sino unas líneas espirales que iban perdiendo lo circular cuanto se iba remitiendo el impulso. Jugaban otras a los alfileres (que es el más frívolo juego que usa la puerilidad); yo me llegaba a contemplar las figuras que formaban; y viendo que acaso se pusieron tres en triángulo, me ponía a enlazar uno en otro, acordándome de que aquélla era la figura que dicen tenía el misterioso anillo de Salomón, * en que había unas lejanas luces y representaciones de la Santísima Trinidad, en virtud de lo cual obraba tantos prodigios

710 y maravillas; y la misma que dicen tuvo el arpa de David, y que por eso sanaba Saúl a su sonido; y casi la misma conservan las arpas en nuestros tiempos.

[28] Pues ¿qué os pudiera contar, Señora, de los secretos naturales que he descubierto estando guisando? Veo que un huevo se une y fríe en la manteca o aceite y, por contrario, se despedaza en el almíbar; ver que para que el azúcar se conserve fluida basta echarle una muy mínima parte de agua en que haya estado membrillo u otra fruta agria; ver que la yema y clara de un mismo huevo son tan contrarias, que en los unos, que sirven para el azúcar, sirve cada una de por sí y juntos no. Por no cansaros con tales frialdades, * que sólo refiero por daros entera noticia de mi natural y creo que os causará risa; pero, señora, ¿qué podemos saber las mujeres sino filosofías de cocina? Bien dijo Lupercio Leonardo, que bien se puede filosofar y aderezar la cena. Y yo suelo decir viendo estas cosas: Si Aristóteles hubiera guisado, mucho más hubiera escrito. Y prosiguiendo en mi modo de cogitaciones, * digo que esto es tan continuo en mí, que no necesito de libros; y en una ocasión que, por un grave accidente de estómago, me prohibie-

this day, without my having control over it; rather, I tend to find it annoying, because it fires my head. Yet I believed this happened to everyone, as with thinking in verse, until experience taught me otherwise. This trait, whether a matter of nature or custom, * is such that nothing do I see without a second thought. Two little girls were playing with a top in front of me, and no sooner had I seen the motion and shape than I began, with this madness of mine, * to observe the easy movement of the spherical form and how the momentum lasted, now fixed and set free of its cause; for even far from its first cause, which was the hand of the girl, the little top went on dancing. Yet not content with this, I ordered flour to be brought and sifted on the floor, so that as the top danced over it, we could know whether its movement described perfect circles or no. I found they were not circular, but rather spiral lines that lost their circularity as the top lost its momentum. Other girls were playing at spillikins (the most frivolous of all childhood games). I drew near to observe the shapes they made, and when I saw three of the straws by chance fall in a triangle, I fell to intertwining one with another, recalling that this was said to be the very shape of Solomon's mysterious ring, * where distantly there shone bright traces and representations of the Most Blessed Trinity, by virtue of which it worked great prodigies and marvels. And they say David's harp had the same shape, and thus was Saul cured by its sound; to this day, harps have almost the same form.

Well, and what then shall I tell you, my Lady, of the secrets [28] of nature that I have learned while cooking? I observe that an egg becomes solid and cooks in butter or oil, and on the contrary that it dissolves in sugar syrup. Or again, to ensure that sugar flow freely one need only add the slightest bit of water that has held quince or some other sour fruit. The yolk and white of the very same egg are of such a contrary nature that when eggs are used with sugar, each part separately may be used perfectly well, yet they cannot be mixed together. I shall not weary you with such inanities, * which I relate simply to give you a full account of my nature, and I believe this will make you laugh. But in truth, my Lady, what can we women know, save philosophies of the kitchen? It was well put by Lupercio Leonardo [sic] that one can philosophize quite well while preparing supper. I often say, when I make these little observations, "Had Aristotle cooked, he would have written a great deal more." And so to go on with the mode of my cogitations: * I declare that all this is so continual in me that I have no need of books. On one occasion, because of a severe stomach ailment, the doctors forbade me to study. I spent sev-

730 ron los médicos el estudio, pasé así algunos días, y luego les propuse que era menos dañoso el concedérmelos, porque eran tan fuertes y vehementes mis cogitaciones, que consumían más espíritus en un cuarto de hora que el estudio de los libros en cuatro días; y así se redujeron a concederme que leyese; y más, Señora mía, que ni aun el sueño se libró* de este continuo movimiento de mi imaginativa; antes suele obrar en el más libre y desembarazada, confiriendo con mayor claridad y sosiego las especies que ha conservado del día, arguyendo, haciendo versos, de que os pudiera hacer un catálogo muy grande, y de 740 algunas razones y delgadezas que he alcanzado dormida mejor que despierta, y las dejo por no cansaros, * pues basta lo dicho para que vuestra discreción y transcendencia penetre y se entere perfectamente en todo mi natural y del principio, medios y estado de mis estudios.

(29) Si éstos, Señora, fueran méritos (como los veo por tales celebrar en los hombres), no lo hubieran sido en mí porque obro necesariamente. Si son culpa, por la misma razón creo que no la he tenido; * mas, con todo, vivo siempre tan desconfiada de mí, que ni en esto ni en otra cosa me fío de mi juicio; 750 y así remito la decisión a ese soberano talento, sometiéndome luego a lo que sentenciare, sin contradicción ni repugnancia, * pues esto no ha sido más de una simple narración de mi inclinación a las letras.

(30) * Confieso también que con ser esto verdad tal que, como he dicho, no necesitaba de ejemplares, * con todo no me han dejado de ayudar los muchos que he leído, así en divinas como en humanas letras. Porque veo a una Débora dando leyes, así en lo militar como en lo político, y gobernando el pueblo donde había tantos varones doctos. Veo una sapientísima reina de 760 Sabá, tan docta que se atreve a tentar con enigmas la sabiduría del mayor de los sabios, sin ser por ello reprendida, antes por ello será juez de los incrédulos. Veo tantas y tan insignes mujeres: unas adornadas del don de profecía, como una Abigail; otras de persuasión, como Ester; otras, de piedad, como Rahab; otras de perseverancia, como Ana, madre de Samuel; y otras infinitas, en otras especies de prendas y virtudes. (31) Si revuelvo a los gentiles, lo primero que encuentro es con las Sibilas, elegidas de Dios para profetizar los principales mis-

eral days in that state, and then quickly proposed to them that it would be less harmful to allow me my books, for my cogitations were so strenuous and vehement that they consumed more vitality in a quarter of an hour than the reading of books could in four days. And so the doctors were compelled to let me read. What is more, my Lady, not even my sleep has been free* of this ceaseless movement of my imagination. Rather, my mind operates in sleep still more freely and unobstructedly, ordering with greater clarity and ease the events it has preserved from the day, presenting arguments and composing verses. I could give you a very long catalogue of these, as I could of certain reasonings and subtle turns I have reached far better in my sleep than while awake; but I leave them out in order not to weary you.* I have said enough for your judgment and your surpassing eminence to comprehend my nature with clarity and full understanding, together with the beginnings, the methods, and the present state of my studies. 810

If studies, my Lady, be merits (for indeed I see them extolled as such in men), in me they are no such thing: I study because I must. If they be a failing, I believe for the same reason that the fault is none of mine.* Yet withal, I live always so wary of myself that neither in this nor in anything else do I trust my own judgment. And so I entrust the decision to your supreme skill and straightway submit to whatever sentence you may pass, posing no objection or reluctance.* for this has been no more than a simple account of my inclination to letters. 820

* I confess also that, while in truth this inclination has been such that, as I said before, I had no need of exemplars, * nevertheless the many books that I have read have not failed to help me, both in sacred as well as secular letters. For there I see a Deborah issuing laws, military as well as political, and governing the people among whom there were so many learned men. I see the exceedingly knowledgeable Queen of Sheba, so learned she dares to test the wisdom of the wisest of all wise men with riddles, without being rebuked for it; indeed, on this very account she is to become judge of the unbelievers. I see so many and such significant women: some adorned with the gift of prophecy, like an Abigail; others, of persuasion, like Esther; others, of piety, like Rahab; others, of perseverance, like Anna [Hannah] the mother of Samuel; and others, infinitely more, with other kinds of qualities and virtues. (31) If I consider the Gentiles, the first I meet are the Sibyls, chosen by God to prophesy the essential mysteries of our Faith in such learned and elegant verses that they stupefy the imagination.* I 840

terios de nuestra Fe; y en tan doctos y elegantes versos que suspenden la admiración. * Veo adorar por diosa de las ciencias a una mujer como Minerva, hija del primer Júpiter y maestra de toda la sabiduría de Atenas. Veo una Pola Argentaria, que ayudó a Lucano, su marido, a escribir la gran Batalla Farsálica. Veo a la hija del divino Tiresias, más docta que su padre. Veo a una Cenobia, reina de los Palmirenos, tan sabia como valerosa. A una Arete, hija de Aristipo, doctísima. A una Nicotrata, inventora de las letras y eruditísima en las griegas. A una Aspasia Milecia que enseñó filosofía y retórica y fue maestra del filósofo Pericles. A una Hipasia que enseñó astrología y leyó mucho tiempo en Alejandría. A una Leoncia, griega, que escribió contra el filósofo Teofrasto y le convenció. A una Jucia, a una Corina, a una Cornelia; y en fin a toda la gran turba de las que merecieron nombres, ya de griegas, ya de musas, ya de pitonisas; pues todas no fueron más que mujeres doctas, tenidas y celebradas y también veneradas de la antigüedad por tales. Sin otras infinitas, de que están los libros llenos, pues veo aquella egipciaca Catarina, leyendo y convenciendo todas las sabidurías de los sabios de Egipto. Veo una Gertrudis leer, escribir y enseñar. Y para no buscar ejemplos fuera de casa, 790 veo una santísima madre mía, Paula, docta en las lenguas hebrea, griega y latina y aptísima para interpretar las Escrituras. * ¿Y qué más que siendo su cronista un Máximo Jerónimo, apenas se hallaba el Santo digno de serlo, pues con aquella viva ponderación y enérgica eficacia con que sabe explicarse dice: Si todos los miembros de mi cuerpo fuesen lenguas, no bastarían a publicar la sabiduría y virtud de Paula. Las mismas alabanzas le mereció Blesila, viuda; y las mismas la esclarecida virgen Eustoquio, hijas ambas de la misma Santa; y la segunda, tal, que por su ciencia era llamada Prodigio del 800 Mundo. Fabiola, romana, fue también doctísima en la Sagrada Escritura. Proba Falconia, mujer romana, escribió un elegante libro con centones de Virgilio, de los misterios de Nuestra Santa Fe. Nuestra reina Doña Isabel, mujer del décimo Alfonso, es corriente que escribió de astrología. Sin otras que omito por no trasladar lo que otros han dicho (que es vicio que siempre he abominado), pues en nuestros tiempos está floreciendo la gran Cristina Alejandra, Reina de Suecia, tan docta

see a woman such as Minerva, daughter of great Jupiter and mistress of all the wisdom of Athens, adored as goddess of the sciences. I see one Polla Argentaria, who helped Lucan, her husband, to write the *Battle of Pharsalia*. I see the daughter of the divine Tiresias, more learned still than her father. I see, too, such a woman as Zenobia, queen of the Palmirians, as wise as she was courageous. Again, I see an Arete, daughter of Aristippus, most learned. A Nicotrata, inventor of Latin letters and most erudite in the Greek. An Aspasia Miletia, who taught philosophy and rhetoric and was the teacher of the philosopher Pericles. An Hypatia, who taught astrology and lectured for many years in Alexandria. A Leontium, who won over the philosopher Theophrastus and proved him wrong. A Julia, a Corinna, a Cornelia; and, in sum, the vast throng of women who merited titles and earned renown: now as Greeks, again as Muses, and yet again as Pythoresses. For what were they all but learned women, who were considered, celebrated, and indeed venerated as such in Antiquity? Without mentioning still others, of whom the books are full; for I see the Egyptian Catherine, lecturing and refuting all the learning of the most learned men of Egypt. I see a Gertrude read, write, and teach. And seeking no more examples far from home, I see my own most holy mother Paula, learned in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin tongues and most expert in the interpretation of the Scriptures. * What wonder then can it be that, though her chronicler was no less than the unequalled Jerome, the Saint found himself scarcely worthy of the task, for with that lively gravity and energetic effectiveness with which only he can express himself, he says: "If all the parts of my body were tongues, they would not suffice to proclaim the learning and virtues of Paula." Blesilla, a widow, earned the same praises, as did the luminous virgin Eustochium, both of them daughters of the Saint herself [Paula]; and indeed Eustochium was such that for her knowledge she was hailed as a World Prodigy. Fabiola, also a Roman, was another most learned in Holy Scripture. Proba Falconia, a Roman woman, wrote an elegant book of centos, joining together verses from Virgil, on the mysteries of our holy Faith. Our Queen Isabella, wife of Alfonso X, is known to have written on astrology — without mentioning others, whom I omit so as not merely to copy what others have said [which is a vice I have always detested]: Well then, in our own day there thrive the great Christina Alexandra, Queen of Sweden, as learned as she is brave and generous; and too those most excellent ladies, the Duchess of Aveyro and the Countess of Villambrosa. 850

como valerosa y magnánima, y las Excelentísimas señoras Duquesa de Aveyro y Condesa de Villumbrosa.

- [32] El venerable Doctor Arce (digno profesor de Escritura por su virtud y letras), en su *Studio Bibliorum* excita esta cuestión: *An liceat foeminis sacrorum Bibliorum studio incumbere? ea que interpretari?* Y trae por la parte contraria muchas sentencias de santos, en especial aquello del Apóstol: *Mulieres in Ecclesiis taceant, non enim permittitur eis loqui*, etc. Trae después otras sentencias, y del mismo Apóstol aquel lugar ad Titum: *Annus similitur in habitu sancto, bene docentes*, con interpretaciones de los Santos Padres; y al fin resuelve, con su prudencia, que el leer públicamente en las cátedras y predicar en los púlpitos, no es lícito a las mujeres; pero que el estudiar, escribir y enseñar privadamente, no sólo les es lícito, pero muy provechoso y útil; claro está que esto no se debe entender con todas, sino con aquellas a quienes hubiere Dios dotado de especial virtud y prudencia y que fueren muy provecas y eruditas y tuvieren el talento y requisitos necesarios para tan sagrado empleo. Y esto es tan justo que no sólo a las mujeres, que por tan ineptas están tenidas, sino a los hombres, que con sólo serlo piensan que son sabios, se había de prohibir la interpretación de las Sagradas Letras, en no siendo muy doctos y virtuosos y de ingenios dóciles y bien inclinados; porque de lo contrario creo yo que han salido tantos sectarios y que ha sido la raíz de tantas herejías; porque hay muchos que estudian para ignorar, especialmente los que son de ánimos arrogantes, inquietos y soberbios, amigos de novedades en la Ley (que es quien las rehusa); y así hasta que por decir lo que nadie ha dicho dicen una herejía, no están contentos. De éstos * dice el Espíritu Santo: *In malevolam animam non introibit sapientia*. A éstos, más daño les hace el saber que les hiciera el ignorar. Dijo un discreto que no es necio entero el que no sabe latín, pero el que lo sabe está calificado. Y añado yo que le perfecciona (si es perfección la necesidad) el haber estudiado su poco de filosofía y teología y el tener alguna noticia de lenguas, que con eso es necio en muchas ciencias y lenguas; porque un necio grande no cabe en sólo la lengua materna.

- [33] A éstos, vuelvo a decir, hace daño el estudiar, porque es poner espada en manos del furioso; * que siendo instrumento nobilísi-

The venerable Dr. Arce (worthy professor of Scripture, known for his virtue and learning), in his *For the Scholar of the Bible*, raises this question: *"Is it permissible for women to apply themselves to the study, and indeed the interpretation, of the Holy Bible?"* And in opposition he presents the verdicts passed by many saints, particularly the words of [Paul] the Apostle: *"Let women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted them to speak,"* etc. Arce then presents differing verdicts, including this passage addressed to Titus, again spoken by the Apostle: *"The aged women, in like manner, in holy attire [...] teaching well,"* and he gives other interpretations from the Fathers of the Church. Arce at last resolves, in his prudent way, that women are not allowed to lecture publicly in the universities or to preach from the pulpits, but that studying, writing, and teaching privately is not only permitted but most beneficial and useful to them. * Clearly, of course, he does not mean by this that all women should do so, but only those whom God may have seen fit to endow with special virtue and prudence, and who are very mature and erudite and possess the necessary talents and requirements for such a sacred occupation. And so just is this distinction that not only women, who are held to be so incompetent, but also men, who simply because they are men think themselves wise, are to be prohibited from the interpretation of the Sacred Word, save when they are most learned, virtuous, of amenable intellect and inclined to the good. For when the reverse is true, I believe, numerous sectarians are produced, and this has given rise to numerous heresies. For there are many who study only to become ignorant, especially those of arrogant, restless, and prideful spirits, fond of innovations in the Law (the very thing that rejects all innovation). And so they are not content until, for the sake of saying what no one before them has said, they speak heresy. Of such men as these * the Holy Spirit says: *"For wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul."* For them, more harm is worked by knowledge than by ignorance. A wit once observed that he who knows no Latin is not an utter fool, but he who does know it has met the prerequisites. And I might add that he is made a perfect fool (if foolishness can attain perfection) by having studied his bit of philosophy and theology and by knowing something of languages. For with that he can be foolish in several sciences and tongues; a great fool cannot be contained in his mother tongue alone.

To such men, I repeat, study does harm, because it is like putting a sword in the hands of a madman: * though the sword be the noblest of instruments for defense, in his hands it becomes

mo para la defensa, en sus manos es muerte suya y de muchos. Tales fueron las Divinas Letras en poder del malvado Pelagio y del protervo Arrio, del malvado Lutero y de los demás herejes, como lo fue nuestro Doctor [nunca fue nuestro ni doctor] Cazalla; a los cuales hizo daño la sabiduría porque, aunque es el mejor alimento y vida del alma, a la manera que en el estómago mal acomodado y de viciado calor, mientras mejores los alimentos que recibe, más áridos, fermentados y perversos son los humores que cria, así estos malévolos, mientras más estudian, peores opiniones engendran; obstruyesen el entendimiento con lo mismo que había de alimentarse, y es que estudian mucho y digieren poco, sin proporcionarse al vaso limitado de sus entendimientos. A esto dice el Apóstol:

860 *Dico enim per gratiam quae data est mihi, omnibus qui sunt inter vos: Non plus sapere quam oportet sapere, sed sapere ad sobrietatem: et unicuique sicut Deus divisit mensuram fidei.* Y en verdad no lo dijo el Apóstol a las mujeres, sino a los hombres; y que no es sólo para ellas el *laceant*,* sino para todos los que no fueren muy aptos. Querer yo saber tanto o más que Aristóteles o que San Agustín, si no tengo la aptitud de San Agustín o de Aristóteles, aunque estudie más que los dos, no sólo no lo consigo, seguiré sino que debilitaré y entorpeceré la operación de mi flaco entendimiento con la desproporción del objeto.

(34) ¡Oh si todos –y yo la primera, que soy una ignorante –* nos tomásemos la medida al talento antes de estudiar, y lo peores, de escribir con ambiciosa codicia de igualar y aun de exceder a otros, qué poco ánimo nos quedara y de cuántos errores nos excusáramos y cuántas torcidas inteligencias que andan por ahí no anduvieran! Y pongo las más en primer lugar, pues si conociera, como debo, esto mismo no escribiera. Y protesto que sólo lo hago por obedeceros; con tanto recelo, que me debéis más en tomar la pluma con este temor, que me debíades si os remitiera más perfectas obras. Pero, bien que va a vuestra corrección; borrado, rompido y reprehedme, que eso apreciaré yo más que todo cuanto vano aplauso me pueden otros dar: *Corripiet me iustus in misericordia, et increpabit: oleum autem peccatoris non impinguet caput meum.*

(35) Y volviendo a nuestro Arce, digo que trae en confirmación de su sentir aquellas palabras de mi Padre San Jerónimo (*ad*

his own death and that of many others. This is what the Divine Letters became in the hands of that wicked Pelagius and of the perverse Arius, of that wicked Luther, and all the other heretics, 930 like our own Dr. Cazalla (who was never either our own nor a doctor). Learning harmed them all, though it can be the best nourishment and life for the soul. For just as an infirm stomach, suffering from diminished heat, produces more bitter, putrid, and perverse humors the better the food that it is given, so too these evil persons give rise to worse opinions the more they study. Their understanding is obstructed by the very thing that should nourish it, and the fact is they study a great deal and digest very little, failing to measure their efforts to the narrow vessel of their understanding. In this regard the Apostle has said: “For I say, by the 940 grace that is given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety, and according as God hath divided to every one the measure of faith.” And in truth the Apostle said this not to women but to men, and the “Let [them] keep silence” was meant not only for women,* but for all those who are not very competent. If I wish to know as much as or more than Aristotle or St. Augustine, but I lack the ability of a St. Augustine or an Aristotle, then I may study more than both of them together, but I shall not only fail to reach my goal: I shall weaken and stupefy the workings of my feeble understanding with such a disproportionate aim. 950

Oh, that all men – and I, who am but an ignorant woman, first (34) of all* – might take the measure of our abilities before setting out to study and, what is worse, to write, in our jealous aspiration to equal and even surpass others. How little boldness would we summon, how many errors might we avoid, and how many distorted interpretations now noised abroad should be noised no further! And I place my own before all others, for if I knew all that I ought, I would not so much as write these words. Yet I protest that I do so only to obey you: and with such misgiving that you owe me more for taking up my pen with all this fear than you would owe me were I to present you with the most perfect works. But withal, it is well that this goes to meet with your correction: erase it, tear it up, and chastise me, for I shall value that more than all the vain applause others could give me. “The just man shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me: but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head.”

And returning to our own Arce, I observe that in support of his (35) views he presents these words of my father St. Jerome (in the Letter To Leta, on the Education of Her Daughter), where he says: “[Her] 970

Laetam, de institutione filiae), donde dice: *Adhuc tenera lingua psalmis dulcibus imbuatur. Ipsa nomina per quae consuescit paulatim verba contexere; non sint fortuita, sed certa, et coacervata de industria. Prophetarum videlicet, atque Apostolorum, et omnis ab Adam Patriarcharum series, de Matthaeo, Lucaque descendat, ut dum aliud agit, futurae memoriae praeparetur. Reddat tibi pensum quotidie, de Scripturarum floribus caplum.* Pues si así quería el Santo que se educase una niña que apenas empezaba a hablar, ¿qué querrá en sus monjas y en sus hijas espirituales? Bien se conoce en las referidas Eustoquio y Fabiola y en Marcela, su hermana, Pacátula y otras a quienes el Santo honra en sus epístolas, exhortándolas a este sagrado ejercicio, como se conoce en la citada epístola donde noté yo aquel *reddat tibi pensum*, que es reclamo y concordante del *bene docentes* de San Pablo; pues el *reddat tibi* de mi gran Padre da a entender que la maestra de la niña ha de ser la misma Leta su madre.

(36) * ¡Oh cuántos daños se excusaran en nuestra república si las ancianas fueran doctas como Leta, y que supieran enseñar como manda San Pablo y mi Padre San Jerónimo! Y no que por defecto de esto y la suma flojedad en que han dado en dejar a las pobres mujeres, * si algunos padres desean doctrinar más de lo ordinario a sus hijas les fuerza la necesidad y falta de ancianas sabias, a llevar maestros hombres a enseñar a leer, escribir y contar, a tocar y otras habilidades, de que no pocos daños resultan, como se experimentan cada día en lastimosos ejemplos de desiguales consorcios, porque con la intermediación del trato y la comunicación del tiempo, suele hacerse fácil lo que no se pensó ser posible. Por lo cual, muchos quieren más dejar bárbaras e incultas a sus hijas que no exponerlas a tan notorio peligro como la familiaridad con los hombres, lo cual se excusara si hubiera ancianas doctas, como quiere San Pablo, y de unas en otras fuese sucediendo el magisterio como secede en el de hacer labores * y lo demás que es costumbre.

(37) Porque ¿qué inconveniente tiene que una mujer anciana, docta en letras y de santa conversación y costumbres, tuviese a su cargo la educación de las doncellas? Y no que éstas o se pierden por falta de doctrina o por querérsela aplicar por tan peligrosos medios cuales son los maestros hombres, que cuando no hubiera más riesgo que la indecencia de sentarse al lado

childish tongue must be imbued with the sweet music of the Psalms. [...] The very words from which she will get into the way of forming sentences should not be taken at haphazard but be definitely chosen and arranged on purpose. For example, let her have the names of the prophets and the apostles, and the whole list of patriarchs from Adam downwards, as Matthew and Luke give it. She will then be doing two things at the same time, and will remember them afterwards. [...] Let her every day repeat to you a portion of the Scriptures as her fixed task. "Very well, if the Saint wished a little girl, scarcely beginning to speak, to be instructed thus, what must he desire for his nuns and spiritual daughters? We see this most clearly in the women already mentioned—Eustochium and Fabiola—and also in Marcela, the latter's sister; in Pacátula, and in other women whom the Saint honors in his epistles, urging them on in this holy exercise. This appears in the letter already cited, where I noted the words "let her repeat to you . . ." which serve to reclaim and confirm St. Paul's description, "teaching well." For the "let her repeat the task to you" of my great Father makes clear that the little girl's teacher must be Leta herself, the girl's mother.

* Oh, how many abuses would be avoided in our land if the older women were as well instructed as Leta and knew how to teach as is commanded by St. Paul and my father St. Jerome! Instead, for lack of such learning and through the extreme feebleness in which they are determined to maintain our poor women, * if any parents then wish to give their daughters more extensive Christian instruction than is usual, necessity and the lack of learned older women oblige them to employ men as instructors to teach reading and writing, numbers and music, and other skills. This leads to considerable harm, which occurs every day in doleful instances of these unsuitable associations. For the immediacy of such contact and the passage of time all too frequently allow what seemed impossible to be accomplished quite easily. For this reason, many parents prefer to let their daughters remain uncivilized and untutored, rather than risk exposing them to such notorious peril as this familiarity with men. Yet all this could be avoided if there were old women of sound education, as St. Paul desires, so that instruction could be passed from the old to the young just as is done with sewing * and all the customary skills.

For what impropriety can there be if an older woman, learned in letters and holy conversation and customs, should have in her charge the education of young maids? Better so than to let these young girls go to perdition, either for lack of any Christian teaching or because one tries to impart it through such dangerous

de una mujer verecunda (que aun se sonrosea de que la mire a la cara su propio padre) un hombre tan extraño a tratarla con casera familiaridad y a tratarla con magistral llaneza, el pudor del trato con los hombres y de su conversación basta para que no se permitiese. Y no hallo yo que este modo de enseñar de hombres a mujeres pueda ser sin peligro, si no es en el severo tribunal de un confesionario o en la distante docencia de los púlpitos o en el remoto conocimiento de los libros, pero no en el manoseo de la inmediación. * Y todos conocen que esto es verdad; y con todo, se permite sólo por el defecto de no haber ancianas sabias; luego es grande daño el no haberlas. Esto debían considerar los que atados al *Mulieres in Ecclesia taceant*, blasfeman de que las mujeres sepan y enseñen; como que no fuera el mismo Apóstol el que dijo: *bene docentes*. Demás de que aquella prohibición cayó sobre lo historial que refiere Eusebio, y es que en la Iglesia primitiva se ponían las mujeres a enseñar las doctrinas unas a otras en los templos; y este rumor confundía cuando predicaban los apóstoles y por eso se les mandó callar; como ahora sucede, que mientras predica el predicador no se reza en alta voz.

[38] No hay duda de que para inteligencia de muchos lugares* es menester mucha historia, costumbres, ceremonias, proverbios y aun maneras de hablar de aquellos tiempos en que se escribieron, para saber sobre qué caen y a qué aluden algunas locuciones de las divinas letras. * *Scindite corda vestra, et non vestimenta vestra*, ¿no es alusión a la ceremonia que tenían los hebreos de rasgar los vestidos, en señal de dolor, como lo hizo el mal pontífice cuando dijo que Cristo había blasfemado? * Muchos lugares del Apóstol sobre el socorro de las viudas * ¿no miraban también a las costumbres de aquellos tiempos? Aquel lugar de la mujer fuerte: * *Nobilis in portis vir eius* ¿no alude a la costumbre de estar los tribunales de los jueces en las puertas de las ciudades? El *dare terram Deo* ¿no significaba hacer algún voto? *Hiemantes* ¿no se llamaban los pecadores públicos, porque hacían penitencia a cielo abierto, a diferencia de los otros que la hacían en un portal? Aquella queja de Cristo al fariseo de la falta de ósculo y lavatorio de pies* ¿no se fundó en la costumbre que de hacer estas cosas tenían los judíos? Y otros infinitos lugares no sólo de las letras divinas sino tam-

means as male teachers. For if there were no greater risk than the simple indecency of seating a completely unknown man at the side of a bashful woman (who blushes if her own father should look her straight in the face), allowing him to address her with household familiarity and to speak to her with intimate authority, even so the modesty demanded in interchange with men and in conversation with them gives sufficient cause to forbid this. Indeed, I do not see how the custom of men as teachers of women can be without its dangers, save only in the strict tribunal of the confessional, or the distant teachings of the pulpit, or the remote wisdom of books; but never in the repeated handling that occurs in such immediate and tarnishing contact. * And everyone knows this to be true. Nevertheless, it is permitted for no better reason than the lack of learned older women; therefore, it does great harm not to have them. This point should be taken into account by those who, tied to the "*Let women keep silence in the churches*," curse the idea that women should acquire knowledge and teach, as if it were not the Apostle himself who described them "*teaching well*." Furthermore, that prohibition applied to the case related by Eusebius: to wit, that in the early Church, women were set to teaching each other Christian doctrine in the temples. The murmur of their voices caused confusion when the apostles were preaching, and that is why they were told to be silent. Just so, we see today that when the preacher is preaching, no one prays aloud.

There can be no doubt that in order to understand many passages, * one must know a great deal of the history, customs, rituals, proverbs, and even the habits of speech of the times in which they were written, in order to know what is indicated and what alluded to by certain sayings in divine letters. * "*Rend your hearts, and not your garments*"—is that not an allusion to the Hebrews' ritual of tearing their clothing as a sign of grief, as was done by the evil high priest when he said that Christ had blasphemed? * Do not many passages by the Apostle [Paul], on the aid and comfort of widows, * refer to the customs of his times? Or that passage concerning the strong woman, * "*Her husband is honourable in the gates*," does it not allude to the custom of placing the judges' tribunals at the city gates? The saying "*Give land to God*," does it not stand for making some vow? Was not the term *hiemantes* used for public sinners, because they made their penance out of doors, unlike others who did penance in a doorway? The complaint of Christ to the Pharisee who failed to greet Him with the kiss of peace or the washing of feet, * is that not based on the Jewish

bién de las humanas, * que se topan a cada paso, como el *adorate purpuram*, que significaba obedecer al rey; el *manumittere eum*, que significa dar libertad, aludiendo a la costumbre y ceremonia de dar una bofetada al esclavo para darle libertad. Aquel *intonuit coelum*, de Virgilio, que alude al agüero de tronar hacia occidente, que se tenía por bueno. Aquel *tu nunquam leporem edisti*, de Marcial, que no sólo tiene el donaire de equívoco en el *leporem*, sino la alusión a la propiedad que decían tener la liebre. Aquel proverbio: *Maleam legens, quae sunt domi obiviscere*, que alude al gran peligro del promontorio de Laconia. Aquella respuesta de la casta matrona al pretensor molesto, de: *por mí no se untarán los quicios, ni arderán las teas*, para decir que no quería casarse, aludiendo a la ceremonia de untar las puertas con mantea y encender las teas nupciales en los matrimonios; como si ahora dijéramos: por mí no se gastarán arras ni echará bendiciones el cura. * Y así hay tanto comentario de Virgilio y de Homero y de todos los poetas y oradores. Pues fuera de esto, ¿qué dificultades no se hallan en los lugares sagrados, aun en lo gramatical, de ponerse el plural por singular, * de pasar de segunda a tercera persona, * como aquello de los Cantares: *osculetur me osculo oris sui: quia meliora sunt ubera tua vino?* Aquel poner los adjetivos en genitivo, en vez de acusativo, * como *Calicem salutaris accipiam?* Aquel poner el femenino por masculino; y, al contrario, llamar adulterio a cualquier pecado? *

(39) Todo esto pide más lección de lo que piensan algunos que, de meros gramáticos, o cuando mucho con cuatro términos de Súmulas, * quieren interpretar las Escrituras y se aferran del *Mulieres in Ecclesiis taceant*, sin saber cómo se ha de entender. Y de otro lugar: *Mulier in silentio discat*, siendo este lugar más en favor que en contra de las mujeres, pues manda que aprendan, y mientras aprenden claro está que es necesario que callen. * Y también está escrito: *Audi Israel, et tace*; donde se habla con toda la colección de los hombres y mujeres, y a todos se manda callar, porque quien oye y aprende es mucha razón que atienda y calle. Y si no, yo quisiera que estos intérpretes y expositores de San Pablo me explicaran cómo entienden aquel lugar: *Mulieres in Ecclesia taceant*. Porque o lo han de entender de lo material de los púlpitos y cátedras, o de lo

custom of doing these things? And so it is with infinitely many more passages, not only in divine but in humane letters* as well, which are met at every turn, like the phrase "Honor the purple," which meant "Obey the king"; or the phrase "to put a hand to him," which meant "to emancipate," referring to the custom and ritual of giving a slave a slap to set him at liberty. Again, Virgil's "The heavens thundered," alluding to the augury of thunder toward the west, which was thought a good omen. There is Martial's "You never ate hare," which shows not only the wordplay in *leporem* [which means both "hare" and "jest"], but also a reference to a quality the hare was said to possess. There is the proverb, "To sail the shores of Malia is to forget all the things of home," which refers to the great peril of the promontory of Laconia. The response of the chaste matron to an unwanted suitor, "No doorframes shall be appointed on my account, nor shall the torches burn," to say that she would not marry, alludes to the ritual of appointing the doorways with oil and lighting nuptial torches at weddings; just so, we might say today, "On my account shall no dowry coins be spent, nor shall the priest give his blessing." * And in this vein, much commentary can be made on Virgil and Homer and all the poets and orators. Very well, and in addition to all this, what difficulties do we not find in sacred texts, even in matters of grammar — putting the plural in place of the singular, * or moving from second to third person, * like the passage in the Song of Songs: "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth: for thy breasts are better than wine?" Or putting the adjectives in the genitive case, instead of the accusative, * as in "I will take the chalice of salvation?" Or again, putting the feminine in place of the masculine; or, on the contrary, calling every sin adultery? *

All this requires more study than is supposed by certain men who, as mere grammarians or, at most, armed with four terms from the principles of logic, * wish to interpret the Scriptures and cling to the "Let women keep silence in the churches,"—without knowing how to understand it rightly. So it is with another passage, "Let the woman learn in silence", for this passage is more in favor of than against women, as it says that they should learn, and while they are learning, obviously, they must needs keep quiet. * And it is also written, "Hear, O Israel, and be silent," where the whole congregation of men and women are addressed, and all are told to be quiet, for whoever listens and learns has good reason to take heed and keep still. If this be not so, I would like these interpreters and expounders of St. Paul to explain to me how they understand the passage, "Let women keep silence in the churches." For they must

- formal de la universalidad de los fieles, que es la Iglesia. Si lo entienden de lo primero (que es, en mi sentir, su verdadero sentido, pues vemos que, con efecto, no se permite en la Iglesia que las mujeres lean públicamente ni prediquen), ¿por qué reprenden a las que privadamente estudian? Y si lo entienden de lo segundo y quieren que la prohibición del Apóstol sea trascendentalmente, que ni en lo secreto se permita escribir ni estudiar a las mujeres, ¿cómo vemos que la Iglesia ha permitido que escriba una Gertrudis, una Teresa, una Brígida, la monja de Agreda y otras muchas? Y si me dicen que éstas eran santas, es verdad, pero no obsta a mi argumento; lo primero, porque la proposición de San Pablo es absoluta y comprende a todas las mujeres sin excepción de santas, pues también en su tiempo lo eran Marta y María, Marcela, María madre de Jacob, y Salomé, y otras muchas que había en el fervor de la primitiva Iglesia, y no las exceptúa; y ahora vemos que la Iglesia permite escribir a las mujeres santas y no santas, pues la de Agreda y María de la Antigua no están canonizadas y corren sus escritos; y ni cuando Santa Teresa y las demás escribieron, lo estaban: luego la prohibición de San Pablo sólo miró a la publicidad de los púlpitos, pues si el Apóstol prohibiera el escribir, no lo permitiera la Iglesia. Pues ahora, yo no me atrevo a enseñar — que fuera en mí muy desmedida presunción —; y el escribir, mayor talento que el mío requiere y muy grande consideración. Así lo dice San Cipriano: *Gravi consideratione indigent, quae scribimus*. Lo que sólo he deseado es estudiar para ignorar menos: que, según San Agustín, unas cosas se aprenden para hacer y otras para sólo saber: *Discimus quaedam, ut sciamus; quaedam, ut faciamus*. Pues ¿en qué ha estado el delito, * si aun lo que es lícito a las mujeres, que es enseñar escribiendo, no hago yo porque conozco que no tengo caudal para ello, siguiendo el consejo de Quintiliano: *Noscat quisque, et non tantum ex alienis praeceptis, sed ex natura sua capiat consilium?*
- (40) Si el crimen está en la Carta Atenagórica, ¿fue aquélla más que referir sencillamente mi sentir con todas las venias que debo a nuestra Santa Madre Iglesia? * Pues si ella, con su santísima autoridad, no me lo prohíbe, ¿por qué me lo han de prohibir otros? ¿Llevar una opinión contraria de Vieira fue en mí

understand it either materially, to mean the pulpit and the lecture hall, or formally, to mean the community of all believers, 1100 which is to say the Church. If they understand it in the first sense (which is to my way of thinking its true sense, for we can see that indeed it is not permitted by the Church for women to read publicly or to preach), why then do they rebuke those women who study in private? And if they understand it in the second sense and wish to extend the Apostle's prohibition to all instances without exception, so that not even in private may women write or study, then how is it that we see the Church has allowed a Gertrude, a Teresa, a Brigid, the nun of Agreda, and many other women to write? And if they tell me that these women all were saintly, true enough, but that in no way hinders my argument. First, because St. Paul's proposition is absolute and includes all women with no exception made for saints; for saintly, too, in their own day were Martha and Mary, and Marcela, and Mary the mother of Jacob, and Salome, and many other women who took part in the zeal of the early Church, yet Paul makes no exception for them. And in our own time we see that the Church permits writing by women saints and those who are not saints alike; for the nun of Agreda and María de la Antigua are not canonized, yet their writings go from hand to hand. Nor when Sts. Teresa and the others were writing, had they yet been canonized. Therefore, St. Paul's prohibition applied only to public speech from the pulpit; for if the Apostle were to prohibit all writing, then the Church could not permit it. Very well now, I am not so bold as to teach, which would be most unsuitably presumptuous of me; and to write requires more talent than is mine and the greatest deliberation. So says St. Cyprian: "*That which we write requires solemn deliberation.*" All that I have desired has been to study, so as to become less ignorant. For according to St. Augustine, some things are learned so as to act on them, and others simply for the sake of knowing them: "*We learn certain things in order to know them; others in order to do them.*" Then where is my transgression, * if I refrain even from that which is permissible for women — to teach by writing — because I know myself to lack the abundant talent needed for it, following Quintilian's counsel: "*Let each one learn, not so much by the precepts of others, as by following the counsel of his own nature?*"

If my crime lies in the "Letter Worthy of Athena," was that anything more than a simple report of my opinion, with all the indulgences granted me by our Holy Mother Church? * For if She, with her most holy authority, does not forbid my writing, why must others forbid it? Is it bold of me to oppose Vieira, yet not

atrevimiento, y no lo fue en su Paternidad llevarla contra los tres Santos Padres de la Iglesia? Mi entendimiento tal cual ¿no es tan libre como el suyo, pues viene de un solar? ¿Es alguno de los principios de la Santa Fe, revelados, * su opinión, para que la hayamos de crear a ojos cerrados? Demás que yo ni falté al decoro que a tanto varón se debe, como acá ha faltado su defensor, olvidado de la sentencia de Tito Lucio: *Ares committatur decor*, ni toqué a la Sagrada Compañía * en el pelo de la ropa; ni escribí más que para el juicio de quien me lo insinuó, y según Plinio, *non similis est conditio publicantis, et nominatum dicentis*. Que si creyera se había de publicar, no fuera con tanto desaliño como fue. Si es, como dice el censor, * herética, ¿por qué no la delata? y con eso él quedará vengado y yo contenta, que aprecio, como debo, más el nombre de católica y de obediente hija de mi Santa Madre Iglesia, que todos los aplausos de docta. Si está bárbara — que en eso dice bien —, riase, aunque sea con la risa que dicen del conejo, * que yo no le digo que me aplauda, pues como yo fui libre para disentir de Vleyra, lo será cualquiera para disentir de mi dictamen.

(41) Pero ¿dónde voy, Señora mía? Que esto no es de aquí, ni es para vuestros oídos, sino que como voy tratando de mis impugnadores, me acordé de las cláusulas de uno que ha salido ahora, e insensiblemente se deslizó la pluma al quererle responder en particular, siendo mi intento hablar en general. Y así, volviendo a nuestro Arce, dice que conoció en esta ciudad dos monjas: * la una en el convento de Regina, que tenía el Breviario de tal manera en la memoria, que aplicaba con grandísima prontitud y propiedad sus versos, salmos y sentencias de homilías de los santos, en las conversaciones. La otra, en el convento de la Concepción, tan acostumbrada a leer las Epístolas de mi Padre San Jerónimo, y locuciones del Santo, de tal manera que dice Arce: *Hieronymum ipsum hispane loquentem audire me existimarem*. Y de ésta dice que supo, después de su muerte, había traducido dichas Epístolas en romance; y se duele de que tales talentos no se hubieran empleado en mayores estudios con principios científicos, sin decir los nombres de la una ni de la otra, aunque las trae para confirmación de su sentencia, que es que no sólo es lícito, pero utilísimo y necesario a las mujeres el estudio de las sagradas

so for that Reverend Father to oppose the three holy Fathers of the Church? Is my mind, such as it is, less free than his, though it derives from the same source? Is his opinion to be taken as one of the principles of the Holy Faith made manifest, * that we must believe it blindly? Besides which, I have not in the slightest way fallen short of that respect owed such a great man, as his defender has done in this instance, forgetting the observation of Titus Lucretius, "*Respect befits the arts*." Nor did I so much as graze the hem of the blessed Society. * Nor did I write for anyone other than the person who suggested it to me; and according to Pliny, "*The situation of one who publishes a thing is different from that of one who speaks it by name*." For had I thought the letter was to be published, it would not have appeared as unkempt as it was. If it is heretical, as the critic says, * why does he not denounce it? Thus he would find revenge and I contentment, for I more greatly value, as I ought, the name of Catholic and obedient daughter of my Holy Mother Church than any praise that might befall me as a scholar. If the letter be crude — as he rightly says it is — then let him laugh at it, though he laugh falsely with what they call rabbit's laughter. * I do not say that he should praise me, for just as I was free to disagree with Vieira, any person shall be free to disagree with my judgment.

But where am I bound, my Lady? For none of this is pertinent (41) here; nor meant for your ears; instead, as I was speaking of my detractors, I recalled the phrases of one such who has recently appeared, and all unwittingly my pen strayed in a desire to reply to him specifically, although my intention is to speak generally. And so, to return to our good Arce: he relates that he knew two nuns in this City, * one of them in the Convent of Regina, who had so thoroughly committed to memory the Divine Office that with the greatest alacrity and propriety she would apply its verses, psalms, and maxims from the homilies of the saints to all her conversations. The other, in the Convent of the Conception, was so adept in reading the Epistles of my father St. Jerome, and so well versed in his sayings, that Arce says: "*I thought that I heard Jerome himself, speaking in Spanish*." Of the second nun, Arce says that he learned, after her death, that she had translated those very Epistles into the Spanish language; and he grieves that such talents should not have been set to higher studies, guided by principles of science. He never mentions the name of either nun, but he presents them in support of his verdict that the study of sacred letters is not only permissible but most useful and necessary for women, and all the more so for nuns. This is the same end to

letras, y mucho más a las monjas, que es lo mismo a que vuestra discreción me exhorta y a que concurren tantas razones.

142) Pues si vuelvo los ojos a la tan perseguida habilidad de hacer versos – que en mí es tan natural, que aun me violento para que esta carta no lo sean, y pudiera decir aquello de *Quidquid conabar dicere, versus erat* –, viéndola condenar a tantos tanto y acriminar, he buscado muy de propósito cuál sea el daño que puedan tener, y no le he hallado; antes sí los veo aplaudidos en las bocas de las Sibilas; santificados en las plumas de los Profetas, especialmente del Rey David, de quien dice el gran expositor y amado Padre mío, * dando razón de las mensuras de sus metros: *In morem Flacci et Pindari nunc iambo currit, nunc alcaico personat, nunc sapphico tumet, nunc semipede ingreditur*.

1090 Los más de los libros sagrados están en metro, como el Cántico de Moisés; y los de Job, dice San Isidoro, en sus Etimologías, que están en verso heroico. En los Epitalamios los escribió Salomón; en los Trenos, Jeremías. Y así dice Casiodoro: *Omnis poetica locutio a Divinis scripturis sumpsit exordium*. Pues nuestra Iglesia Católica no sólo no los desdena, mas los usa en sus Himnos y recita los de San Ambrosio, Santo Tomás, de San Isidoro y otros. San Buenaventura les tuvo tal afecto que apenas hay plana suya sin versos. San Pablo bien se ve que los habla estudiado, pues los cita, y traduce el de Arato: *In ipso enim vivimus, et movemur, et sumus*, y alega el otro de Parménides: *Cretenses semper mendaces, malae bestiae pigri*. San Gregorio Nacianceno disputa en elegantes versos las cuestiones de Matrimonio y la de la Virginidad. Y ¿qué me canso? La Reina de la Sabiduría y Señora nuestra, con sus sagrados labios, entonó el Cántico de la *Magnificat*; y habiéndola traído por ejemplo, agravio fuera traer ejemplos profanos, aunque sean de varones gravísimos y doctísimos, pues esto sobra para prueba; y el ver que, aunque como la elegancia hebrea no se pudo estrechar a la mensura latina, a cuya causa el traductor sagrado, * más atento a lo importante del sentido, omitió el verso, con todo, retienen los Salmos el nombre y divisiones de versos; pues ¿cuál es el daño que pueden tener ellos en sí? Porque el mal uso no es culpa del arte, sino del mal profesor que los vicia, haciendo de ellos lazos del demonio; y esto en todas las facultades y ciencias sucede.

which I am urged by your discretion, and wherein so many arguments concur.

*Now, if I turn my eyes to my much-maligned skill at writing in verse – so natural to me that indeed I must force myself not to write this very letter in rhyme, and I could observe as another did, “*Whatever I tried to say came out in verse*”, seeing this facility for writing poems condemned by so many and so vilified, I have sought quite deliberately to discover what harm there might be in them, and I cannot. Rather, I see them praised in the mouths of the Sibyls and sanctified by the pens of the Prophets, especially that of King David, of whom the great expositor, my own beloved Father, * says in scanning the measures of his meters: “*In the style of Horace and Pindar, now it runs in iambs, now it resounds in the alcaic measure, now it swells in sapphics, now in half-feet it moves slowly forward*.” The greater part of our sacred books are written in meter, like the Canticle of Moses; and most of Job, according to the *Eymologies* of St. Isidore, is in heroic verse. Solomon wrote poetry in the *Epithalamia*, as did Jeremiah in his Lamentations. Cassiodorus says the following: “*All poetic speech had its origins in the Holy Scriptures*.” Indeed, our own Catholic Church, far from spurning verses, employs them in her hymns and recites those of St. Ambrose, St. Thomas, St. Isidore, and others. St. Bonaventure was so fond of them that scarcely a page of his lacks verses. It is clear that St. Paul had studied them, for he cites them, and translates the following from Aratus: “*For in him we live, and move, and are*”; and he quotes another, from Parménides: “*The Cretians [sic] are always liars, evil beasts, slothful bellies*.” St. Gregory of Nazianzus debates in elegant verses the questions of matrimony and virginity. And why should I grow weary? Our Lady, the Queen of Knowledge, with her blessed lips intoned the Canticle of the *Magnificat*; and once having presented her as an exemplar, it would be injurious to present profane examples, be they the verses of men ever so solemn and learned, for that would exceed the needs of proof. And we see that although the elegance of the Hebrew could not be bound in the Latin meter, so that the sacred translator, * heeding more closely the essence of the meaning, was obliged to omit the verse, yet still the Psalms retain the name and divisions of verses. Then what harm can verses cause in and of themselves? For their misuse is no fault of the art, but of the bad practitioner who debases them, fashioning devil’s snares of them. And this occurs in all the faculties and sciences.

And if the evil lies in their being used by a woman, we have just seen how many women have used them most laudably; then

(43) Pues si está el mal en que los use una mujer, ya se ve cuántas los han usado loablemente; pues ¿en qué está el serlo yo? Confieso desde luego mi ruindad y vileza; pero no juzgo que se habrá visto una copla mía indecente. Demás, que yo nunca he escrito cosa alguna por mi voluntad, sino por ruegos y preceptos ajenos; de tal manera, que no me acuerdo haber escrito por mi gusto sino es un papelillo que llaman *El Sueño*. Esa carta que vos, Señora mía, honrasteis tanto, * la escribí con más repugnancia que otra cosa; y así porque era de cosas sagradas a quienes (como he dicho) tengo reverente temor, como porque parecía querer impugnar, cosa a que tengo aversión natural. Y creo que si pudiera haber prevenido el dichoso destino a que nació — pues, como a otro Moisés, la arrojé expósita a las aguas del Nilo del silencio, donde la halló y acarició una princesa como vos —; creo, vuelvo a decir, que si yo tal pensara, la ahogara antes entre las mismas manos en que nació, de miedo de que pareciesen a la luz de vuestro saber los torpes borrones de mi ignorancia. De donde se conoce la grandeza de vuestra bondad, pues está aplaudiendo vuestra voluntad lo que precisamente ha de estar repugnando vuestro clarísimo entendimiento. Pero ya que su ventura la arrojó a vuestras puertitas, tan expósita y huérfana que hasta el nombre le pusisteis vos, pésame que, entre más deformidades, llevase también los defectos de la prisa; porque así por la poca salud que continuamente tengo, como por la sobra de ocupaciones en que me pone la obediencia, y carecer de quien me ayude a escribir, y estar necesitada a que todo sea de mi mano y porque, como iba contra mi genio y no quería más que cumplir con la palabra a quien no podía desobedecer, no veía la hora de acabar; y así dejé de poner discursos enteros y muchas pruebas que se me ofrecían, y las dejé por no escribir más; que, a saber que se había de imprimir, no las hubiera dejado, siquiera por dejar satisfechas algunas objeciones que se han excitado, y pudiera remitir, pero no será tan desatenta que ponga tan indecentes objetos a la pureza de vuestros ojos, pues basta que los ofenda con mis ignorancias, sin que los remita a ajenos atrevimientos. Si ellos por sí volaren por allá (que son tan livianos que sí harán), me ordenaréis lo que debo hacer; que, si no es intervinendo vuestros preceptos, lo que es por mi defensa nunca

what evil lies in my being one? I confess straightway my rough and uncouth nature; but I wager not a soul has seen an indecent verse of mine. What is more, I have never written a single thing of my own volition, but rather only in response to the pleadings and commands of others; so much so that I recall having written nothing at my own pleasure save a trifling thing they call the *Dream*. The letter that you so honored, * my Lady, I wrote with greater abhorrence than anything else. This was because it treated sacred matters for which (as I have said) I hold such reverent dread; and, too, because it would appear to be an attempt at refutation, to which I have a natural aversion. And I believe that, could I have foreseen the happy destiny for which it was born — for I cast it out, like a second Moses, as a foundling upon the waters of the Nile of silence, where it was discovered and cherished by a princess no less than yourself — I believe, as I was saying, that were I to have imagined any such thing, I should first have drowned it with these very hands to which it was born, for fear that the dull-witted scribbles of my ignorance should appear before the light of your knowledge. Thus we know the extent of your noble beneficence; for your goodwill applauds precisely what your most brilliant discernment should repudiate. But now that the letter's fate has cast it before your doors, a foundling so orphaned that its very name was bestowed by you, I regret that among all its many deformities it displays the defects of hasty composition. This is so as much on account of the poor health that is always mine as of the surfeit of tasks that obedience requires of me and the lack of anyone to help me with writing, so that it must all be done in my own hand. And while the task went against my character, yet I wanted nothing more than to keep my word to one whom I could not disobey, so that I thought I should never be done with it. And thus I left out entire arguments and a great many proofs that occurred to me, omitting them so as to be done writing. Had I known it was to be printed, I would not have left them out, were it only for the sake of satisfying a few objections that have arisen. And I could submit the latter to you; but I shall not be so careless as to set such indecent objects before the purity of your eyes, for it is enough that I offend them with my stupidities, without submitting them to the effronteries of others. If of their own account these go flying about (for they are so flighty that they will do so), you must order how I should proceed. Unless your instructions intervene, I shall never in my own defense take up the pen again. * For it seems to me that one who, by the very act of concealing his identity, acknowledges error needs no

1160 tomaré la pluma,* porque me parece que no necesita de que otro le responda, quien en lo mismo que se oculta conoce su error, pues, como dice mi Padre San Jerónimo, *bonus sermo secreta non quaerit*, y San Ambrosio: *latere criminosa est conscientiae*. Ni yo me tengo por impugnada, pues dice una regla del Derecho: *Accusatio non tenetur si non curat de persona, quae prodixerit illam*. Lo que sí es de ponderar es el trabajo que le ha costado el andar haciendo traslados. ¡Para demencia: cansarse más en quitarse el crédito que pudiera en granjearlo! Yo, Señora mía, no he querido responder; aunque otros lo han hecho, sin saberlo yo: basta que he visto algunos papeles, y entre ellos uno que por docto os remito y porque el leerle os desquite parte del tiempo que os he malgastado en lo que yo escribo. Si vos, Señora, gustáredes de que yo haga lo contrario de lo que tenía propuesto a vuestro juicio y sentir, al menor movimiento de vuestro gusto cederá, como es razón, mi dictamen que, como os he dicho, era de callar, porque aunque dice San Juan Crisóstomo: *calumniatores convincere oportet, interrogatores docere*, veo que también dice San Gregorio: *Victoria non minor est, hostes tolerare, quam hostes vincere*; y que la paciencia vence tolerando y triunfa sufriendo. Y si entre los gentiles romanos era costumbre, en la más alta cumbre de la gloria de sus capitanes – cuando entraban triunfando de las naciones, vestidos de púrpura y coronadas de laurel, tirando el carro, en vez de brutos, coronadas frentes de vencidos reyes, acompañados de los despojos de las riquezas de todo el mundo y adornada la milicia vencedora de las insignias de sus hazañas, oyendo los aplausos populares en tan honrosos títulos y renombres como llamarios Padres de la Patria, Columnas del Imperio, Muros de Roma, Amparos de la República y otros nombres gloriosos –, que en este supremo auge de la gloria y felicidad humana fuese un soldado, en voz alta diciendo al vencedor, como con sentimiento suyo y orden del Senado: Mira que eres mortal; mira que tienes tal y tal defecto; sin perdonar los más vergonzosos, como sucedió en el triunfo de César, que voceaban los más viles soldados a sus oídos: *Cavete romani, adducimus vobis adulterum calvum*. Lo cual se hacía porque en medio de tanta honra no se desvaneciese el vencedor, y por que el lastre de estas afrontas hiciese contrapeso a las velas

one to make accusation. As my father St. Jerome says, "*Honest words seek no quiet retreat*"; and St. Ambrose, "*If is the nature of a guilty conscience to hide away*." Nor do I consider myself to be impugned, for as a rule of Law maintains, "*An accusation cannot be upheld if it fails to pay heed to the character of the person who made it*." But what is worthy of wonder is the labor it has cost him to go about making copies. An odd dementia it is to wear oneself out more in avoiding credit than one could in earning it! My Lady, I have not wished to reply, though others have done so without my knowledge. It is enough that I have seen certain papers, among them one I send to you because it is learned, and because reading it will restore to you a portion of your time that I have wasted with what I am writing. If by your wisdom and sense, my Lady, you should be pleased for me to do other than what I propose, then as is only right, to the slightest motion of your pleasure I shall cede my own decision, which was as I have told you to keep still. For although St. John Chrysostom says, "*One's slanderers must be proven wrong, and one's questioners must be taught*," I see too that St. Gregory says, "*It is no less a victory to tolerate one's enemies than to defeat them*," and that patience defeats by tolerance and triumphs by suffering. Indeed, it was the custom among the Roman Gentiles, for their captains at the very height of glory – when they entered triumphing over other nations, clothed in purple and crowned with laurel; with their carts drawn by the crowned brows of vanquished kings rather than by beasts of burden; accompanied by the spoils of the riches of all the world, before a conquering army decorated with the emblems of its feats; hearing the crowd's acclaim in such honorable titles and epithets as Fathers of the Fatherland, Pillars of the Empire, Ramparts of Rome, Refuge of the Republic, and other glorious names – it was the custom, at this supreme apex of pride and human felicity, that a common soldier should cry aloud to the conqueror, as if from his own feeling and at the order of the Senate: "*Behold, how you are mortal; behold, for you have such and such a failing*." Nor were the most shameful excused; as at the triumph of Caesar, when the most contemptible soldiers shouted in his ears, "*Beware, Romans, for we bring before you the bald adulterer*." All of this was done so that in the midst of great honor the conqueror might not puff up with pride, and that the ballast of these affronts might prove a counterweight to the sails of so much praise, so that the ship of sound judgment should not founder in the winds of acclaim. If, as I say, all this was done by mere Gentiles, guided only by the light of Natural Law, then for us as Cath-

de tantos aplausos, para que no peligrase la nave del juicio entre los vientos de las aclamaciones. Si esto, digo, hacían unos gentiles, con sola la luz de la Ley Natural, nosotros, católicos, con un precepto de amar a los enemigos, ¿qué mucho haremos en tolerarlos? Yo de mí puedo asegurar que las calumnias algunas veces me han mortificado, pero nunca me han hecho daño, porque yo tengo por muy necio al que teniendo ocasión de merecer, pasa el trabajo y pierde el mérito, que es como los que no quieren conformarse al morir y al fin mueren sin servir su resistencia de excusar la muerte, sino de quitarles el mérito de la conformidad, y de hacer mala muerte la muerte que podía ser bien. Y así, Señora mía, estas cosas creo que aprovecharán más que dañan, y tengo por mayor el riesgo de los aplausos en la flaqueza humana, que suelen apropiarse lo que no es suyo, y es menester estar con mucho cuidado y tener escritas en el corazón aquellas palabras del Apóstol: *Quid autem habes quod non accepisti? Si autem accepisti, quid gloriaris quasi non acceperis?*, para que sirvan de escudo que resista las puntas de las alabanzas, que son lanzas que, en no atribuyéndose a Dios, cuyas son, nos quitan la vida y nos hacen ser ladrones de la honra de Dios y usurpadores de los talentos que nos entregó y de los dones que nos prestó y de que hemos de dar estrechísima cuenta. Y así, Señora, yo temo más esto que aquello; porque aquello, con sólo un acto sencillo de paciencia, está convertido en provecho; y esto, son menester muchos actos reflexos de humildad y propio conocimiento para que no sea daño. Y así, de mí lo conozco y reconozco que es especial favor de Dios el conocerlo, para saberme portar en uno y en otro con aquella sentencia de San Agustín: *Amico laudanti credendum non est, sicut nec inimico detrahenti*. Aunque yo soy tal que las más veces lo debo de echar a perder o mezclarlo con tales defectos e imperfecciones, que vicio lo que de suyo fuera bueno. Y así, en lo poco que se ha impreso mío, no sólo mi nombre, pero ni el consentimiento para la impresión ha sido dictamen propio, sino libertad ajena que no cae debajo de mi dominio, como lo fue la impresión de la carta Atenagórica; de suerte que solamente unos *Ejercicios de la Encarnación* y unos *Ofrecimientos de los Dolores*, se imprimieron con gusto mío por la pública devoción, pero sin mi nombre; de los cuales remito algunas

olics, who are commanded to love our enemies, is it any great matter for us to tolerate them? For my part, I can testify that these detractions have at times been a mortification to me, but they have never done me harm. For I think that man very foolish who, having the opportunity to earn due merit, undertakes the labor and then forfeits the reward. This is like people who do not want to resign themselves to death. In the end they die all the same, with their resistance serving not to exempt them from dying, but only to deprive them of the merit of conformity to God's will, and thus to give them an evil death when it could have been blessed. And so, my Lady, I think these detractions do more good than harm. I maintain that a greater risk to human frailty is worked by praise, which usually seizes what does not belong to it, so that one must proceed with great care and have inscribed in one's heart these words of the Apostle: "*Or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*" For these words should serve as a shield to deflect the prongs of praises, which are spears that, when not attributed to God to whom they belong, take our very lives and make us thieves of God's honor and usurpers of the talents that He bestowed on us, and of the gifts He lent us, for which we must one day render Him a most detailed account. And so, good Lady, I fear applause far more than slander. For the slander, with just one simple act of patience, is turned to a benefit, whereas praise requires many acts of reflection and humility and self-knowledge if it is not to cause harm. And so, for myself I know and own that this knowledge is a special favor from God, enabling me to conduct myself in the face of one as in the other, following that dictum of St. Augustine: "*One must believe neither the friend who speaks praises nor the enemy who reviles.*" Although I am such a one as most times must either let the opportunity go to waste, or mix it with such failings and flaws that I spoil what left to itself would have been good. And so, with the few things of mine that have been printed, the appearance of my name—and, indeed, permission for the printing itself—have not followed my own decision, but another's liberty that does not lie under my control, as was the case with the "Letter Worthy of Athena." So you see, only some little *Exercises for the Annunciation* and certain *Offerings for the Sorrows* were printed at my pleasure for the prayers of the public, but my name did not appear. I submit to you a few copies of the same, so that you may distribute them (if you think it seemly) among our sisters the nuns of your blessed community and others in this City. Only one copy remains of the *Sorrows*, because

copias, porque (si os parece) los repartáis entre vuestras hermanas las religiosas de esa santa comunidad y demás de esa ciudad. De los *Dolores* va sólo uno porque se han consumido ya y no pude hallar más. Hicelos sólo por la devoción de mis hermanas, años ha, y después se divulgaron: cuyos asuntos son tan improporcionados a mi tibieza como a mi ignorancia, y sólo me ayudó en ellos ser cosas de nuestra gran Reina: que no sé qué se tiene el que en tratando de María Santísima se enciende el corazón más helado. Yo quisiera, venerable Señora mía, remitiros obras dignas de vuestra virtud y sabiduría; pero como dijo el Poeta: *

1250 *Ut desint vires, tamen est laudanda voluntas:
hac ego contentos, auguror esse Deos.*

(144) Si algunas otras cosillas escribiere, siempre irán a buscar el sagrado de vuestras plantas y el seguro de vuestra corrección, pues no tengo otra alhaja con que pagaros, y en sentir de Séneca, el que empezó a hacer beneficios se obligó a continuarlos; y así os pagará a vos vuestra propia liberalidad, que sólo así puedo yo quedar dignamente desempeñada, sin que caiga en mí aquello del mismo Séneca: *Turpe est beneficiis vinci*. Que es bizarría del acreedor generoso dar al deudor pobre, con que pueda satisfacer la deuda. Así lo hizo Dios con el mundo impositado de pagar: diole a su Hijo propio para que se le ofreciese por digna satisfacción. *

(145) *Si el estilo, venerable Señora mía, de esta carta, no hubiere sido como a vos es debido, os pido perdón de la casera familiaridad o menos autoridad de que tratándoos como a una religiosa de velo, hermana mía, se me ha olvidado la distancia de vuestra ilustrísima persona, que a veros yo sin velo, no sucediera así: * pero vos, con vuestra cordura y benignidad, supliréis o enmendaréis los términos, y si os pareciere incongruo el Vos de que yo he usado * por parecerme que para la reverencia que os debo es muy poca reverencia la *Reverencia*, mudadlo en el que os pareciere decente a lo que vos merecéis, que yo no me he atrevido a exceder de los límites de vuestro estilo ni a romper el margen de vuestra modestia.

(146) Y mantenedme en vuestra gracia, para impetarme la divi-

they have all been given away and I could find no more. I made them only for the prayers of my sisters, many years ago, and then they became more widely known. Their subjects are as disproportionate to my lukewarm ability as to my ignorance, and I was helped in writing them only by the fact that they dealt with matters of our great Queen: I know not why it is that in speaking of the Most Blessed Mary, the most icy heart is set aflame. It would please me greatly, my venerable Lady, to send you works worthy of your virtue and wisdom, but as the Poet * remarked:

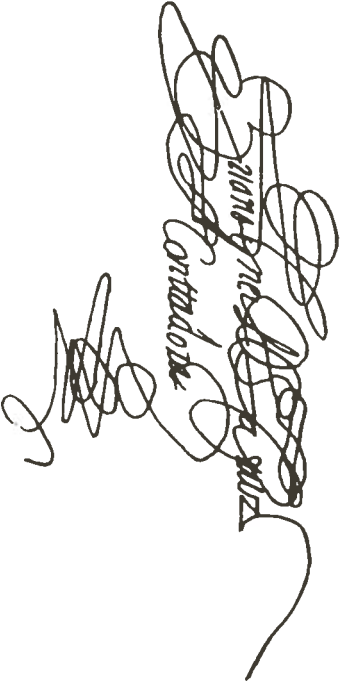
*Even when strength is lacking, still the intention must be praised.
I surmise the gods would be content with that.*

If ever I write any more little trifles, they shall always seek haven at your feet and the safety of your correction, for I have no other jewel with which to repay you. And in the opinion of Seneca, he who has once commenced to confer benefits becomes obliged to continue them. Thus you must be repaid by your own generosity, for only in that way can I be honorably cleared of my debt to you, lest another statement, again Seneca's, be leveled against me: "*It is shameful to be outdone in acts of kindness.*" For it is magnanimous for the generous creditor to grant a poor debtor some means of satisfying the debt. Thus God behaved toward the world, which could not possibly repay Him: He gave His own Son, that He might offer Himself as a worthy amends. *

If the style of this letter, my venerable Lady, has been less than your due, I beg your pardon for its household familiarity or the lack of seemly respect. For in addressing you, my sister, as a nun of the veil, I have forgotten the distance between myself and your most distinguished person, which should not occur were I to see you unveiled. * But you, with your prudence and benevolence, will substitute or emend my terms; and if you think unsuitable the familiar terms of address I have employed * – because it seems to me that given all the reverence I owe you, "Your Reverence" is very little reverence indeed – please alter it to whatever you think suitable. For I have not been so bold as to exceed the limits set by the style of your letter to me, nor to cross the border of your modesty. 1390

And hold me in your own good grace, so as to entreat divine grace on my behalf; of the same, may the Lord grant you great increase, 1461

na, de que os conceda el Señor muchos aumentos y os guarde,
como le suplico y he menester. De este convento de N. Padre
San Jerónimo de Méjico, a primero día del mes de marzo de
mil seiscientos y noventa y un años. B. V. M. vuestra más
1280 favorecida



Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz
Contadora

and may He keep you, as I beg of Him and as I am needful. Write
ten at the Convent of our Father St. Jerome in Mexico City, this
first day of March of the year 1691. Receive the embrace of your
most greatly favored,

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz