

## CHAPTER XIII

### *Of the Sorrowful Way of the Cross, which He walked with Christ when He was led to His Death*

FIRST God spoilt him for a long time with heavenly consolations, and he became quite eager to receive them. All that concerned the Deity was pleasurable to him, but when he had to contemplate Our Lord's Passion, and to submit to imitating Him, that was hard and bitter for him. For this reason he was once severely admonished by God, and a voice within him said: 'Dost thou not know that I am the gate,<sup>1</sup> through which all true Friends of God must pass, who wish to come to true blessedness? Thou must break through My suffering humanity, if thou wouldst truly come to My pure divinity.'<sup>2</sup>

The Servant was afraid: this was a hard word for him. Yet he began to take heed of this, however repugnant it was to him. He began to learn things that he did not know before, and he submitted calmly. So he then began, every night after matins, at his usual place—it was in the chapter house—to sink into Christlike sympathy with all that his Lord and his God, Christ, had once suffered. He got up and walked from corner to corner, so that all sloth might fall from him, and that he might cheerfully and bravely persist in his susceptibility to suffering.

He began with Him at the Last Supper, and walked in his steps from place to place, until he brought Him before Pilate. Last he took Him to the court, already condemned, and went with Him on the sorrowful way

<sup>1</sup> John, x, 9.

<sup>2</sup> One of Suso's favourite themes, borrowed from St. Augustine and St. Bernard. It forms the basis of *The Little Book of Eternal Wisdom*.

of the cross, which He walked from the court of judgment as far as the gallows.

And he went the way of the cross in this manner: when he reached the threshold of the chapter-house, he knelt down and kissed the first footprints which He made, when He had been judged, and turned round to go to His death. Then he began to sing the Psalm of Our Lord's Passion: *Deus, Deus meus, respice*,<sup>1</sup> and while singing it, he went through the door into the cloisters.

Then there were four streets that he went through with the Lord: He went through the first street with Him to His death, desiring that he might leave friends and temporal possessions and suffer for His sake wretched grief and voluntary poverty. In the second street he made a resolve to bring himself to renounce ephemeral honour and fame, and to a voluntary contempt of all this world, meditating on the thought that the Lord Himself had become a worm and a reproach to all men.<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the third street, he knelt down again and kissed the earth, freely surrendering all unnecessary comfort and pampering of the body to share the pain of his delicate body. He imagined to himself, as it is written, how all His strength was dried up,<sup>3</sup> and His nature had perished. And as they drove Him on so cruelly, he considered how justly all eyes should flow over, and all hearts should sigh. Then, when he came to the fourth street, he knelt down in the middle of the road, as if he was kneeling before the gate of the city, through which He must pass, and then he fell down before Him, and kissed the ground, and prayed to Him that He should not go to His death without him, but that he might go close beside Him. And he imagined it all to himself as vividly as he could, and said the little prayer: *Hail, our King, Son of David*, and then let Him pass on.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm, xxxii.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm, xxii, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm, xxii, 15.

After that he knelt down once more, facing the gate and greeted the cross with the verse: *Hail, O Cross, our only hope*, and then let it pass by. After this, he knelt before the gentle Mother, who was led past him in unfathomable grief, and he noticed how lamentable she looked, how sadly she bore herself, and he saw her hot tears, wretched sighs, and sorrowful gestures. He greeted her with the words: *Hail, O Queen*, and kissed her footsteps. He then rose quickly and hastened after his Lord, until he came to His side. And the picture was sometimes as vivid as if he were walking beside Him. Then he remembered that when King David was expelled from his kingdom, the bravest knights marched out at his side and stood by him as his friends.<sup>1</sup>

Here he surrendered his will to the will of God, feeling that whatever God did with him, he would accept for His sake. Finally he took out the Epistle that is read in Holy week from the Prophet Isaiah, which runs: 'Lord, who will believe our report?'<sup>2</sup> which so fittingly depicts Our Lord's going to His death. With that he entered the door of the choir, and went up the steps of the pulpit.

When he came to the foot of the cross, where he had once experienced the Hundred Meditations of His Passion,<sup>3</sup> he knelt down and watched them taking off His clothes, and nailing his Lord to the cross in their savage cruelty. Then he did penance, nailing himself with heartfelt love to his Lord on the cross, praying that neither life nor death, neither sorrow nor joy, might ever divide Him from His Servant.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings, xv, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah, liii, 1.

<sup>3</sup> This is the nucleus of Suso's *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom*.