

The Way of Perfection

Introduction (summary)

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1/ Origins

The Way of Perfection was written at the request of **Teresa's nuns** when they learned that Teresa's confessor at the time, Domingo Banez, refused to allow her book, the **Life** to be circulated among nuns and interested others.

He did however give permission for her to '**write some things on prayer**' and so she wrote the **Way of Perfection** as an **act of obedience** to her nuns. It is thought that Teresa wrote the **first redaction** of the **Way of Perfection** in 1566 and the **second** in 1569.

Teresa summarizes the **subject matter** as '**how one reaches the fount of living water, what the soul feels there, how God satisfies it**'...

She implied that the **Way of Perfection** was an **introduction** to her **Life**. She felt that those who had reached the **fount of living water** would find the **Life** very **beneficial** and receive much **light** from it.

... In answer to the question whether God might give **mystical graces** to **imperfect souls**, Teresa thinks that He would, so as to **free** them from their **imperfections**. But she categorically denies that **contemplation** would ever be granted to someone in **mortal sin** ... In her view, she simply says:

"I want to say, then, that there are times when God will want to grant some great favor to persons who are in a bad state so as to draw them by this means out of the hands of the devil."

2/ Central Theme

When Teresa revised **The Way of Perfection** in 1569... she wrote ... on the opening page:

"This book deals with the advice and counsel Teresa of Jesus gives to her religious Sisters and daughters."

... It is a **practical book of advice and counsel** destined to **initiate the Carmelite nun into a life of prayer**. Thus, Teresa is a **teacher** throughout the work, demonstrating **how to lead a life of prayer**, pointing to the pitfalls, and explaining the right from the wrong way.