

2/ Purpose in Writing

Ch. 1 8-12

Meditations on the Song of Songs

by Teresa of Avila

8. ... These words must contain **great things and mysteries** ... that when I asked learned men to explain what the Holy Spirit meant by them ... they answered that many commentaries had been written and yet the words have never been fully explained. It may seem to be excessive **pride** on my part to want to explain something about them for you ... What I do intend is that, just as I delight in what the Lord gives me understanding of when I hear some passage from the *Song of Songs*, you will perhaps find **consolation** in it, as I do. I interpret the passage in my own way and my understanding may not be in accord with what is meant, but as long as we do not depart from what the Church and the saints hold, the Lord gives us **license**... If we do not indulge in **curiosity** but accept the understanding the Lord gives us, I hold it as certain that we do not **offend** Him when we find **delight** and **consolation** in His words and works... I am not thinking I am right in what I say --- the Lord knows this well --- but it **consoles** me to tell my **meditations** to my **daughters** ... I begin with the **favor** of the Divine King and the **permission** of my confessor. May it please His Majesty that as He has wanted me to succeed in explaining other things for you... I might succeed in explaining these. If I don't, I will consider the time well spent that I occupy in writing and reflecting upon material so divine that I haven't deserved to hear it.

9. It seems to me... that she is speaking to a third person; she makes it known that there are in Christ **two natures**, one **divine** and the other **human** ...

My intention is to speak about what can be beneficial to us who engage in prayer, though all is beneficial for the encouragement and admiration of a soul that loves the Lord.

His Majesty knows well that though at times ... I have heard explanations of some of these words ... I don't remember the explanations at all ... Thus, I shall be able to say only what the Lord teaches me and what serves my purpose. I don't remember ever having heard anything about this first verse: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth.*

10. ... May you be blessed, Lord, for in so many ways have You taught us! ... People will say I am a fool, that the words don't mean this, that they have many meanings, that obviously we must not speak such words to God, and so it is good that simple people do not read these things ... I confess that the passage has many meanings. But the soul that is enkindled with a love that makes it mad, desires nothing else than to say these words... ... Do we not approach the most Blessed Sacrament? And I was wondering if the bride was asking for this favor that Christ afterward gave us. I also wondered whether she was asking for that **union** so great that **God became man**, for that friendship that He effected with the human race. Obviously a **kiss** is the sign of **great peace** and **friendship** among two persons. May the Lord help us understand **how many kinds of peace there are.**

11. ... I hold as certain that there are many persons who approach the most Blessed Sacrament with serious **mortal sins**. Yet, if such persons were to hear a soul dying with love of its God say these words, they would consider it great boldness... they would not say them, for these words in the *Song of Songs* are said by **love**. Since such persons have no love, they can easily read the *Song of Songs* daily and not be involved with the words; nor would they dare take these words

on their lips. Even hearing these words makes one fear, for they have great majesty. How much majesty You bear, my Lord, in the most Blessed Sacrament. But, since these people do not have a **living faith** but rather a **dead** one, You do not speak to them when they see you so **humble** under the species of bread. They do not deserve to hear—thus they are not so daring.

12. Taking these words literally, would cause **fear** if the one uttering them were in his senses. But the one You have drawn out of himself by Your love, You will truly **pardon** if he says them, even though to say them is **daring**.

If the **kiss** signifies **peace** and **friendship** why shouldn't souls ask You for this kiss? What better thing can we ask for than that You give us this **peace** "**with the kiss of Your mouth**? This, daughters, is a lofty petition ... Amen