



The below synthesis of Maria Valtorta is drawn from the Introduction to Volume 1 of *The Poem of the Man-God*, and is interspersed with passages from *The Poem of the Man-God* (Vol: ...), *Maria's Autobiography* (AUT: ...), her 1943 and 1944 *Notebooks* (N43: ... and N44:), and *The Book of Azariah* (AZ: ...).



BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

Maria Valtorta, an only child, was born on the 14th of March 1897 in Caserta, Italy. Her father, Joseph, was a serving non-commissioned officer in the 19th Cavalry Regiment. Her mother, Iside, was a French teacher.

When she was four-and-a-half, her father was transferred to Milan, where Maria was placed in the Ursuline Sisters' kindergarten. Here she began to experience "the desire to console Jesus by becoming like Him in sorrow voluntarily borne out of love".

At seven years of age, she was enrolled in the Institute of the Marcellienne Sisters, where she initiated elementary studies, achieving from the start scholastic recognition as first in her class. On the 30th of May 1905, she was confirmed by the holy Cardinal Andrea Ferrari whose touch "truly infused the Spirit of love into her".

Her father was once again transferred to Voghera where Maria frequented public schools, and at Casteggio, on the first Sunday of October 1908, Maria received her First Holy Communion. But she was deeply grieved at the absence of her father whom she loved so much: her mother, an extremely severe woman, had judged his presence at the ceremony as "unnecessary".

At twelve years of age, Maria went to boarding-school. Her love for study, order and obedience gave her the reputation of being "exemplary". But her mother decided that she should follow a technical course of studies, and Maria - quite inept in mathematics - could not avoid failing her examination badly.

YOUNG ADULTHOOD

After "five terrible scholastic years and four solar years", her mother decreed that she should leave college, and in springtime of 1913, Joseph retired for health reasons, and the Valtorta family moved to Florence, where Maria met Robert. They loved each other, but Maria's mother terminated the budding friendly affection. A similar circumstance was to take place nine years later in Maria's engagement to Mario, a winsome motherless youth, needful of care and affection.

In the spring of 1916, "during a tremendous period of desperation and desire", the Lord attracted her to Himself by means of a dream which was to remain "vivid" in Maria throughout her life. Jesus aided Maria with words of admonishment and piety, as well as a gesture of absolution and blessing, which for Maria were "a cleansing which completely purified her". And she awoke "with her soul, enlightened by something which was not of this world".

But her withdrawal from the world was still remote. In 1917 Maria entered the ranks of the Samaritan Nurses, and for eighteen months offered her service at the military hospital in Florence, having requested assignment with soldiers and not with officers "to serve those who suffered, and not to flirt or find a husband". In exercising this charity, she felt as if she were "sweetly obliged to draw ever closer to God".

On the 17th of March 1920, while walking along a street accompanied by her mother, she "was struck in the back by a young delinquent, with an iron bar stripped from a bed". She remained confined to bed for three months, just a sample of what was to be her future complete infirmity.

AT VIAREGGIO

In 1924, the Valtorta family moved to Viareggio (a coastal resort, due east of Florence), where Maria led a life of solitude, except for "some short excursions to the seaside and pine-forest" and the "daily shopping" which allowed her to "visit Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, without attracting her mother's thunderbolts".

Attracted by the example of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus, whose Autobiography she had read at one sitting, Maria offered herself as victim to the merciful Love (28th January 1925), renewing thereafter "every day" this act of offering.

In December 1929, she was admitted to Catholic Action as youth cultural delegate, and was quick to take on enthusiastic activity - organizing conferences which attracted large audiences, which became progressively more numerous "even among non-practising Catholics".

For some time now she had already pronounced the vows of virginity, poverty and obedience, renewing her offering on the 1st of July 1931, while her suffering, both physical and spiritual, was spared her less and less.

The 4th of January 1933 was the last day on which Maria, walking with extraordinary fatigue, was able to leave her house. And from the 1st of April 1934, she was no longer able to leave her bed.

In May 1935, Martha Diciotti entered the Valtorta household. She was to become Maria's faithful companion, the "listener" of her writings, the one who would lovingly assist and care for her until she died.

Just one month later, however, Maria was to suffer the painful blow of her father's death. The pain of not being able to assist him in his last moments, and of not even seeing his body after his death, brought Maria to feel "between death and life". Her mother became even more callous and despotic, and in her sick-bed, Maria continued to suffer and to love. She became ever more disposed to the will of God - consoling the afflicted, correcting those in spiritual darkness, and receiving painful premonitions about the gravity of the times.

In 1942 she was visited by a pious missionary priest, Fr. Rornuald M. Migliorini of the Servants of Mary, who became her spiritual director for four years. At his request, in 1943, she agreed to write her *Autobiography*, on condition that she would be allowed to tell "all the good and all the bad", in an authentic display of her soul. She had the gift of being a born writer, and prodded by supernatural impulse, on Good Friday, the 23rd of April of the same year 1943, she began writing the "dictations", after having completed the *Autobiography*.

A few months later - on the 4th of October - unaware of her daughter's sublime undertaking, Maria's mother died. Maria had "loved her with a love that not even her harshness had been able to tire or diminish".

At home, now there were just Maria and Martha.

MYSTICAL WRITER

Her activity as writer reached intensity from 1943 to 1947, and continued, diminishing progressively, until 1953. Her first major writing task was the authorship of an extensive autobiography, under instructions from Fr. Migliorini. A glimpse of her writing style, her life of suffering, and her commitment to participation in the saving of souls, is contained in the following passage, where Maria explains how she is able to understand a suffering that comes directly from God:

First of all, the pain which comes from God, no matter how harsh and penetrating it may be, *is never separated from peace*. This is the sign which is never lacking. Even if it sometimes seems not to be present, it *is*. As soon as the soul looks into its depth - and this always occurs, perhaps for an instant, but that's sufficient - it sees that there is a great peace in its suffering. Peace does not mean resignation. It means *much more*. It means beatitude. And the pain which comes from God is always accompanied by super-spiritual beatitude...

On the other hand, the pain that comes from humans - or, worse, from the infernal domains - is always unjust and disturbs us, more or less... It will make us cry out, weep, even curse; it will drive us mad at times, and at times make us die. But we shall die of illnesses of the flesh, go mad through mental derangement, curse as a result of moral convulsion, and sob out of general weakness.

But the pain that comes from God, and pierces our spirit, does not make us fly off the handle: it raises us up to a loftier peace, seriousness, and *charity*. We suffer intensely, very intensely. It is an insatiable hunger, growing hour by hour, which nothing can satisfy... *It is God, God who is wanted, He alone*. And He always keeps Himself hidden, withdraws higher and higher, while we - with the arms of our desire upraised - agonize with love, invoking Him... How many words one must write to state what we experience at every heartbeat!

"What is your conduct during these hours of darkness, as regards God and your neighbour?"

Answer: The more God withdraws, *the more I love Him with my whole self*, in a spirit of humility, patience and submission, recognising that I deserve it. I make continual acts of faith, because I know - even if I do not feel Him - that He is near me all the same, and I tell Him so; acts of hope, because I hope that in his goodness He will shorten the trial, and that through it I may merit a higher good; acts of charity, because, to urge Him to return, I tell Him that I love

Him at any cost, and would love Him even if He were no longer concerned about me; and acts of contrition, because I acknowledge I have sinned and deserve his punishment. Then, as for my neighbour, I make use of this trial of mine by offering God my pain, that other souls that do not seek Him - or seek Him badly - may be led to the fervent search for God. My hour of darkness thus becomes an hour of light...

"Do you feel agitated and spurred to manifest your restlessness externally?"

Answer: No. I get restless because I am flesh and blood in addition to possessing a soul, on account of what I can vex the flesh. But I *never* manifest this. I have stated, and repeat, that the pain which comes from God is very sharp, and is the only kind which is really *pure* Pain - simple, perfect like God; *but it is always joined to peace*. Where there is peace, there is no agitation. I never force God to show Himself with my tantrums. I entreat Him to grant that I may see his Face once again, which is the joy of the spirit. But then I patiently wait that blessed moment...

Sometimes (the pain) lasts a few hours, sometimes several days. Afterwards, though, they suddenly cease, and I pass from desolation to a joy always greater than that experienced before, and to an ever-closer union and ever-clearer vision, nearly to the point of becoming real, sensible, and not just intellectual.

"Do they strike you as aimed at a special end, such as obtaining a grace requested, for example?"

Answer: I believe they are *always aimed at a special end, an end willed by God* for his little host, whom He denies me his Face to give me a longer kiss in Heaven when everything is over for me below. And I am engulfed in the light of the Most Holy Trinity, which I have always loved and praised on earth. *An end wanted by me* for some grace requested. *If I do not suffer, I do not obtain*. Prayer is not enough. And what suffering is greater than this? What are the tortures of a whole sick body in comparison to a single hour of separation, of abandonment by God? It is I myself who say to God, "Have me suffer, but grant me this or that." Not for me, it is understood. I have made a complete renunciation of all my desires. I ask only for Eternal Life. Aside from this, may the Lord do as He wills. But for others, I am an insistent and never-satisfied supplicant. *And especially when I ask for light for a soul in darkness, the darkness then comes over me*. But I am so happy to be martyred by it!

"Are these (periods of abandonment) followed by a greater light on divine things?"

Answer: Always... After the privation of my Sun, when He shines upon my spirit, I find myself enveloped in an ocean of light, so brilliant that it gives me a celestial dizziness. It is as if the door to my jail were opened by a compassionate hand, and I could see a sheaf of sunbeams penetrating through the crack. I say *crack*, because if all the light of God rushed in upon me, I would be left dead... In the light of those beams I see many things which were previously obscure to me, and I proceed securely, as if the Master were holding my hand, instructing me sweetly...

(AUT: 316-21)

On 23rd April 1943, the morning of Good Friday, Maria began to receive the first of an additional and extraordinary number of dictations (and later visions) from Jesus. She dutifully recorded these in an almost sitting position in bed, in ordinary school notebooks which she supported with a piece of cardboard held on her bent knees. She would write at any time, by day or by night, even when she was exhausted by fatigue or tormenting pains. She wrote effortlessly, naturally and without revision. If interrupted, she could leave off writing and then resume later on with ease. She did not consult books, except for the Bible and the catechism of Pope Pius X..

In one of the earlier dictations, Jesus explains to Maria the reasons why He inspired Father Migliorini to ask her to write her autobiography:

"...I did so because I knew that it would do you good. In writing it, you expelled all the bitterness, all the venom, and all the ferment which life had deposited in you. You cleansed yourself of it. You needed to tell yourself again all you had suffered and to tell it to a Christian heart. This is what consoles most as long as you are human beings. You needed, so to speak, to do some spiritual bookkeeping to see what you had given to God and received from God, what you had given to men and received from men.

"Taken one by one, the aspects of life are either too black or too rosy, and people are sometimes led into error on evaluating them. When they are all lined up, all pigeon-holed as in a mosaic, one sees that the blackness is necessary in order for the rosiness not to appear too bold. *One sees that everything falls harmoniously within the design willed by Goodness itself for you, and that what you have received from Goodness is infinitely more than what you have given, to both God and your neighbour.* Then the acts of selfishness, pride, and rancor fall away, and the soul becomes grateful, humble, and charitable and reaches *complete forgiveness.*

"Oh - those who forgive! They are the closest copy of Me, for I forgave everyone, and *I go on forgiving. Then man becomes spiritual.*

"That's why I wanted you to undergo that painful trial as well. You suffered while remembering and writing, but your soul stripped itself of so much humanity, which obstructed your evolution from being a very human creature, to being a spiritual creature. You acted like a butterfly coming out of a cocoon: the sheath which imprisoned your spirit fell away like a dead thing, and your soul opened its wings.

"*Now manage to keep them open always, so as to remain very high and in God's beam. Hear the echo and see the reflection of all the rest: let the only voice in your heart be my Word, and the only sight, your Jesus. Afterwards I will come, and there will be endless Peace.*"

(N43: 112)

A SUCCESSFUL CHALLENGE FROM JESUS

Another early and very significant item, from these *1943 Notebooks*, reminded Maria of a "voice" and a "vision" she had previously seen and heard:

Two years ago, for the first time, I perceived a soundless "voice" responding to my questions (questions I ask myself when meditating about one thing or another). I remember clearly. It followed upon an argument with my cousin (the spiritist). I had replied with a derisory, *stinging* letter.

Three hours later, while I was ruminating over the text, already dispatched, and commending myself on it, adducing human, and somewhat more than human, reasons and approval of my fiery letter, I perceived the "voice": "Do not judge. You cannot know anything. There are things that I permit. There are others that I provoke. And none is without a purpose. And none is understood justly by you human beings. I alone am Judge and Savior. Consider how many of my servants were classified as possessed because they spoke, repeating words emerging from mysterious realms. Consider how many others - whose lives seemed to transpire in the most devout observance of the Law of God and of my Church - are now among those condemned by Me. Do not judge. And do not fear. I am *with you*. Look: have an instant of perception of *my Light* and you will see that the most intense human light is darkness in comparison to my Light."

And I saw that a door seemed to be opening, a large door of bronze - heavy and high... It turned on its hinges with the sound of a harp. I did not see who was pushing it open slowly... From the crack, there filtered through a light so intense, so radiant, so - there is no adjective to describe it - that filled me with heaven. The door went on opening, and from the slit, growing wider and wider, a river of rays of gold, of pearls, of topazes, of diamonds, of all jewels turned into light, embraced me completely and inundated me. I understood in that Light that *we must love everyone, not judge anyone, forgive everything, and live through God alone*. Two years have passed, but I still see that brilliance...

(N43: 28-9)

(Seventeen months later, Maria asked a question of Jesus:)

"Why, in 1941, when the initial contact with that man took place, did You, Master, say to me, 'Do not judge. Over the centuries there have been creatures described as obsessed who were holy, and vice versa. Do not judge, then. I speak where and with whom I want to, and I can speak even to those who seem less worthy'? You said this to me, more or less. I don't have the words of your light here, which I then thought were only an inner inspiration, but I know these were approximately your words."

(And Jesus replied:)

"You did not deserve more, then. And it was not yet the time to give you more. *You needed to come to forgive, to deserve to have Me as a Teacher, in the manner in which you have Me.* From this, consider what merit forgiveness possesses..."

"In 1941, you had a lot of wheat: your love for Truth and your faithfulness to it. You had a lot of good will for serving Me and taking the Light into hearts - even at the price of using a heavy hand, and wounding, to make way for the Light. You were in a great hurry to bring your conquests to my hunger for hearts. You had everything. But not enough yeast of Charity..."

"Souls are patients with one disease or another; they are wounded or convalescent - and these latter ones are indeed fortunate. But if a doctor were to act thoughtlessly upon broken members or exhausted organs, what would happen? And, if he were to say, 'Fool! It's your own fault that you're this way! Accept it! It serves you right! You're disgusting'? As a result, the poor patient - or wounded person, or convalescent - would be demoralized and, in becoming depressed, would not react. Without help he could not consolidate improvement; the wounds would get more putrid, or deeper, because they had not been treated by an expert hand, or had been poorly treated by an inexperienced one..."

"If I had not halted you with my 'Do not judge' - making you reflect that even in someone apparently less suited to being an instrument of God, God might be present - you would have broken, with your violence, what I had knotted together: a silk thread destined to become a ship's hawser, with the cables of superhuman charity and human affection..."

"Go in peace. Your Jesus does nothing without a perfect purpose."...

(N44: 597-600)

"TO BE MY SPOKESMAN"

During her continuous work, her living and constant prayer, and her suffering embraced with the joy of the redeemers, Maria begged God not to allow external signs of her intense participation in Christ, Who used her as faithful "spokesman" and "pen", manifesting Himself in the richness of the "visions" and in the depth of the "dictations". In one of these dictations, Jesus said to Maria:

"May the gift I have given you never induce pride in you, by leading you to believe what is not so about yourself."

"You are nothing but a spokesman and a channel in which the wave of my Voice flows. But as I take you, I could take any other soul. Just *taking it* would make it capable of being a channel and spokesman of the Voice of Christ, for my touch works a *miracle*. But you are nothing. Nothing more than someone in love."

"My spokesmen are found either *among the pure or among sinners who are really converted.*

"Look at the core group of apostles. Who did I give power to? To Peter. The man who had come to Me at the culmination of his manhood, after experiencing the escapades and passions of youth and maturity. The man who was still *so much* a man, after three years of contact with Me, that he became a denier and violent.

"Who did I give revelation and Revelation to? To John, to the flesh that did not know woman, and to the one who was a priest, even before being one. *He was pure and in love.*

"Who did I allow to touch my most pure and divine members before and after the Resurrection? Mary Magdalene, and not Martha.

"Peter and Mary, the converts. John, the pure one. It is always that way.

"But to Peter, in whom the pride of self lay hidden - 'Master, even if everyone else betrays You, I will not betray you' - I did not give what I gave to John. And Peter, a mature man and the head of the core group, had to ask John - a boy in comparison to him - to ask Me who the traitor was. And it was to John that I revealed the last times - not to Peter, the head of my Church.

"I speak where I want to. I speak to whomever I want to. I speak the way I want to. *I have no limitations.*

"*The only limitation, which does not limit Me, but blocks the coming of my Word, is pride and sin.* That is why my Word, which ought to spread out over all Creation from the depths of the Heavens, and instruct the hearts of those marked with my sign, finds so few channels in *all classes of people.* The world - Catholic, Christian, or of other faiths - *is moved by two motors: pride and sin.* How can my Word enter into this arid mechanism? It would be crushed and offended by it.

"Be Johns and Marys, and you shall become the voice of the Voice. *Root out sin and pride. Cultivate charity, humility, purity, faith, and repentance.* They are the plants under which the Master takes his seat to instruct his sheep.

"*To be my spokesman means to enter into an austerity that no monastic rule imposes.* My Presence imposes supernatural reservedness, self-mastery, detachment from things, spiritual ardor, rugged penance, generosity in pain, and lively faith - as does nothing else in the world.

"*It is a gift. But it is taken away if the one to whom it is given departs from the spirit, and remembers that he is flesh and blood.*

"*It is suffering. But if it is suffering which crushes flesh and blood, it possesses in itself - and with itself - a vein of such sweetness, that the manna of the ancient Hebrews is bitter wormwood in comparison to it.*

"It is a glory. But it is not the glory of this earth..."

"And write, then. In what is supernatural, one must never be afraid. The one who dictates to you knows what is being said, and the one who reads you understands, because I have also put him in a position to understand. So set aside all human reconsiderations. Remember that you are my spokesman; you must thus say what I tell you, without reflecting in human terms on the impression that others may get from it..."

(N43: 177-8)

(Five months later, just nine days after Maria received the first dictation of the passages which became The Poem of the Man-God, Jesus said:)

"O beloved daughter, feed on this holy Word, which they bring you and I give to you. Since you are destined to repeat teachings of the Word, who takes your smallness to confound the great and console the humble, accept the food which I offer you, and do not refuse it. If the subject seems disagreeable and inedible, like a heavy roll of parchment - know that I break its seals and crumble its parts for you, because I love you, and I want to nourish you with holy food.

"Open your heart and satisfy its insatiable hunger. *For the heart that has known God is insatiably hungry for Him.* My old and new Gospel shall be most sweet honey for your spirit."

(N43: 609)

CHOSEN BY JESUS

The notebooks written by Maria Valtorta include almost fifteen thousand pages. Little less than two-thirds of this astounding literary production concerns the monumental work on the Life of Jesus (*The Poem of the Man-God*). The minor works include extensive commentaries on biblical texts, doctrinal lessons, histories of the first Christians and martyrs, and pious compositions.

"I can affirm" - one of Valtorta's declarations reads - "that I have had no human source to be able to know what I write, and what, even while writing, I often do not understand". Her writings were transparently the inspired word of another "source", which is evident from the change in writing style - from her own commentaries, to the dictations of Jesus, Mary, and others. The following dictation by Jesus explains why He had chosen Maria for her extraordinary mission:

"Since you have been able to love Me to the extreme limit, I have entrusted to you the Word higher than which there is none. It is in you like a star enclosed in your spirit, and illuminates you with the light of peace and life..."

"There are the ones who come to Me by a common destiny, and there are the ones predestined to be something special in my service.

"Among the predestined there are those who lived like angels from birth on, and there are those who became angels, out of love, after having been men. But they are equally *those predestined to be stars, illuminating the way for their brothers and sisters who are going, and who need so many lights to go...*

"You are among the latter, little creature who live by love. You are among these. After so much torment, you understood that only I could be for you what your soul wanted, and you came.

"But I had chosen you before you existed, to be the voice of the Voice of Jesus the Master. I have waited for this hour, Maria, with the heart of a father and spouse; I have followed you with my gaze, patiently awaiting the hour to tell you my Will and my Word. Nothing was hidden from Me about what you would do that was less good, but neither was anything hidden about what you would dare to do from the moment you would hurl yourself into the current of love.

"You will say, 'You revealed Yourself so late, O Lord'. Late. I would have wanted it to be much sooner, daughter, *but I had to work you as the goldsmith does with rough gold. I shaped you twice. In your mother's womb to give you to the world, but later within Me to give you to Heaven, and make you a bearer of my Light into the world.* I knew when you would come and when you would be mature for service. *God is not in a hurry, for God knows everything about the lives of his children.*

"The hour has come in which you are no longer a woman, but just a soul of your Lord, *an instrument*, as you have said. *And when you wrote that, you did not know that my love would use you in this way after so many years of trial.* Now go, act, and speak according to my desire. I do not say 'command'. *I say 'desire'. For one commands a subordinate, and one makes a request of a friend. And you are my friend.*

"And don't be afraid. Of anything or anyone. Neither the forces of the earth nor the forces of hell will be able to harm you, for you are with Me. *What you say is not your word; it is my word, which I place on your lips so that you will repeat it to the deaf of the earth. What you do is my power, which I give you for the good of those dying in spiritual starvation.*

"You are not the poor Maria, a weak woman, sick, alone, unknown, subject to treachery. You are my beloved disciple, and I swear to you that even if the whole world moved to wage war on you, *it could not take away from you what I have given you, for I am with you...."*

WANTED BY MARY

(Jesus says to Maria:)

« One day Mary, My Mother, said to you: "I ask My Son with tears to give you to Me". And another time: "I leave it to My Jesus to have Me loved... When you love Me I come. And My coming is joy and salvation".

Mother wanted you. And I gave you to Her. Nay, I took you there, because I know that where I can bend with authority, She takes you with the caress of love - and She takes you there even better than I do. Her touch is a seal before which Satan runs away. Now you have Her dress, and if you are faithful to the prayers of the two Orders, you will meditate on all the life of our Mother every day: on Her joys and sorrows. That is, *My joys and My sorrows*. Because since I, the Word, became Jesus, I have rejoiced and wept with Her, and for the same reasons.

So you can see that to love Mary is to love Jesus. It is to love Him more easily. I make you carry the cross, and I put you on the cross. Mother instead carries you, or stands at the foot of the cross to receive you, on Her heart that can only love. Also, at the moment of death, Mary's bosom is more pleasant than a cradle. Whoever breathes his last in Her, hears nothing but the voices of the angelical choruses whirling round Mary. He does not see darkness, but sees the sweet ray of the Morning Star. He hears no weeping, but sees Her smile. He knows no terror. Of Us who love Her, who would dare tear from Mary's arms a creature of *Her's*?

Do not say "Thanks" to Me. Thank Her, Who did not want to remember anything of you, except the little good you have done and the love you have for Me, and that is why She wanted you, to subdue under Her foot what your good will did not succeed in subjugating. Shout: "Long live Mary!" And remain at Her feet at the foot of the Cross. You will adorn your garment with the rubies of My Blood, and with the pearls of Her tears. You will have a queen's robe for your entrance into My Kingdom.

Go in peace. I bless you. »

(Vol. 4: 507)

(Mary says to Maria:)

"I attracted and conquered your spiritual attention with visions of glorious beauty; then, when I saw you were taken up with Me and filled with love for Me, I instructed you and prepared you for more intimate knowledge of your Mother, and for the deepest lessons of my life and that of my Child. This was for the basic lesson of humility, the antidote for the poison of Lucifer, who from *Adam* on has been harming you and diverting you from God's way.

"I appeared to you - through the goodness of my Son - as the bearer of the living Eucharist, then as the Mother of the Savior, and later exalted in Heaven. And after these silent visions of

light and joy - which, like heavenly nets, encircled you and took you to me - I taught you. If your soul had rebelled against the sweet net out of spiritual heaviness, I would have left you. But you enwrapped yourself in it, making those visions your joy, your desire, and your stimulus towards what was better and better. And then, after the Queen, I showed you the Mother. This was to console you - without a mother any longer - to lift you up to my humility, and to carry you off into my joy,

"I always come when it is the right time. I had always loved you. But I asked Jesus for you when I read in God's thought that soon you would no longer have a mother. He prepared the meeting and union - may He be blessed for it! And I came...

"Say this to those who weep. Tell them to believe *in me not* only as a deified Queen, but as a true Woman for whom motherly tenderness is not unknown. Tell them to call me alongside their tears with the most beloved of names, the one I received from my Son, from his childhood until his ascension into Heaven and beyond: 'Mother!' *I will be the 'mother'.*"

(N43: 604-5)

(After a night of physical agony, Maria hears Mary's voice:)

"Among brothers, there may still occur moments of sternness, incomprehension, and the resulting tears. The older brother avails himself of his primogeniture, in order to be demanding towards the younger ones. But a good mother is never rigid, uncomprehending, or deaf to the suffering of those born to her. Her heart as a mother breaks as much over the crying of her firstborn, as over that of the last son born. Her breast is a pillow for the flesh of her flesh - whether of the firstborn, or of the last to be born. Her hands join in entreaty on behalf of the son suffering from his brother's severity. She does not resign herself until she sees the older one calmed down, and the younger one consoled.

"This happens in someone who is a mother of flesh and blood. But I am the Mother. You were not born to Me of flesh and blood, but of my spirit - joined to God in an eternal marriage - and of my pain.

"My child, you heard Me say, 'I will be a wolf in order to defend the doctrine of My Son.' But just as I, the Lord's Ewe Lamb, would become a wolf in regard to my Jesus' legacy, so as a mother who defends her children, I am able to rise up in defense of them, against *anything* which may carry out an assault to slay a child of mine.

"I defend you, Maria. Do not weep. you are under my mantle. Close your eyes, so as not to see either God's severity, or men's ferocity. Do not speak. Do not move. You could not, poor child of mine, without increasing your pain, without increasing your resistance.

"You have been told to offer at least a little arid prayer, arid in accepting sacrifice. No. It would be useless hypocrisy, and it would poison your soul more than events already have. I want even less. I only want you to abandon yourself to Me.

"Sleep on my breast. You will be healed. Be silent. I will speak for you. Love Me. I am your comfort. I am the Mother. The Mother of Sorrow. And you are not very different from my Jesus when He was laid, dead, on my lap. But you will rise again, my child. Because I want you to."

(N44: 275-6)

MARIA'S LATER YEARS

Maria wrote above all in time of war and in very difficult conditions, including evacuation, whereby on the 24th of April 1944 she was obliged to move to St. Andrew of Compito, in the province of Lucca. She returned to her dear home at Viareggio on the 23rd of December that same year.

Her mission as writer did not isolate her from the world. She was concerned for the persons near her, assisting them in their lives and worries with enlightened counsel and, when necessary, with secret and heroic sacrifices which miraculously solved painful cases. She was not indifferent to the fate of her country which she loved so much, nor did she forego her civil duties, even to the point of having herself transported by ambulance to the polling station on the 18th of April 1948.

On the 18th of April 1949, Maria offered to God the sacrifice of not seeing the ecclesiastic approval of the Work, and she added also the precious gift of her own intelligence. The Lord must have taken her at her word because, after seeing the Work "blocked", Maria began a slow process of withdrawal into a kind of psychological isolation, which started, perhaps, in 1956.

Her eyes, however, remained clear, and her attitude tranquil. She never asked for anything, and she allowed herself to be fed like a child. When interrogated because of some serious circumstance regarding her writings, she responded briefly and exactly, as if temporarily shaken out of her state of incommunicability.

Her state of mind was not that of so-called "insanity" (as some of Maria's antagonists would have it). Jesus gave her insights during her earlier years, of the peace and protection she would have, after her works were to become known to the outside world:

"So that you will not faint during your final stops on earth, I am enclosing you in Mary's dwelling. There, disturbance does not enter, for She is the Mother of Peace. There, the Enemy does not enter, for She is the Victorious One.

"Let Mary teach you the supreme flames of Charity - She who is the Daughter, Mother, and Spouse of Charity.

"Cut all ties between yourself and the world. Live in Jesus and Mary. Remember that, even if man had given all his goods to possess love, that would be nothing, for Love is such that in comparison to God - the Love of your souls, the true purpose of your lives - everything loses value. To possess Love is the only thing that counts. And Love is possessed when for Him one is able to renounce everything one has.

"Afterwards peace will come, Maria. There is struggle now. But for the one who loves, it is struggle crowned by victory.

"I will come soon, to exchange your crown of thorns for another one of joy. Persevere.

"Place my seal upon every heartbeat, every work. Engrave it with tears on the fibers of your heart. I am the One who saves and loves."

(N43: 402)

"I said, and from the outset, that my 'spokesman' ought to be left in peace, wrapped in veils of silence which would be lifted after his death. When the prayers and desires of one whom I love - and who is pleasing to Me because of his constantly upright intention - inclined Me to be condescending, I established clauses and guidelines for the protection of my instrument...

"This is not child's play. God's interests and the peace of a heart are at stake here. Be careful, all you men!

"My 'spokesman' - those of you that are close to her know - has always been opposed to every violation of her secret, to every form of exhibitionism, to every proclamation in her favor and honor. She is not a 'violet' for no reason. If I gave her that name, I know why. She has suffered from certain intrusions and acts of incensing. She does not love incense for herself. She wants all of it to be given to her Master, Jesus..."

(N44: 568-9)

(These words of Jesus were subsequently re-enforced, two years later, by Maria's Guardian Angel Azariah:)

"Soul of mine, like a weary wounded dove, you remain in the hollow which is your nest. You remain in God. You do not speak, do not move. You fix yourself. This alone. You cannot do otherwise, oppressed as you are by the pain coming from men, stunned by their anti-charity, and absorbed by God. He shows Himself to you to console you, to say to you, 'I am everything for you'. But words are not needed, for you to be understood by Him who loves you. Your love speaks with its faithful throbbing. And that's enough.

"Forget the world; isolate yourself in your loving silence. Be silent, for every word is useless, sterile, pernicious. Remain in your justice. Remain in your obedience. There is no one greater than God. Follow his commands, then, and nothing more..

"Be silent, therefore. Close yourself to God. He will heal your wounded soul. In silence He will speak to you. Separate yourself. Live in God through God. Let the punishment be fulfilled, and do not judge. Do not judge. God is already judging them. Imitate the Master to be like the Master, as the Gospel says. Imitate Him in love and humility..."

Soul of mine, the Lord is with you, and the Mother covers you with her mantle, as I do with my wings."

(AZ: 137-9)

MARIA'S DEATH

Maria died in her room at Viareggio on the 12th of October 1961, at 10:35 a.m., the 65th year of her life and the 28th of her infirmity. The rector of the Third Order of the Servants of Mary, Fr. Innocenzo M. Rovetti, was called to assist her at her deathbed. She had belonged to this Third Order as well as to the Third Order of Franciscans. At the very moment the priest recited the words: Proficiscere, anima christiana, de hoc mundo (Depart, o Christian soul, from this world), Maria breathed her last. It seemed to be her final act of obedience. The few, solemn visitors were able to admire the brightness of her right hand (the one which had been defined as "pen of the Lord"), while her left hand was turning livid. And her knees, which had served as her desk, were visibly bent under her white dress, even now that she was laid down in the repose of death.

A small procession of motor cars accompanied the deceased to the Mercy Cemetery where the burial took place.

Ten years later, on the 12th of October 1971, her mortal remains were exhumed from the earth and placed in the family niche. On the 2nd of July 1973, however, with civil and ecclesiastic permissions, they were transferred from Viareggio to Florence, to be entombed in the Capitular Chapel in the Grand Cloister of Basilica of the Most Holy Annunciation, where the tomb of Maria Valtorta is still venerated.

DIFFUSION OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

The first editions of Maria Valtorta's writings began to be published, without her name, during the last years of her life. They quickly received an extensive welcome in the world, with diffusion in Italy as well as abroad. They went even to distant lands, and all without publicity,

but with the sole impact of their message of truth and love, which win over men's hearts, changing them for the better.

In a "dictation" of the 23rd of August 1943, we find the following words of Jesus addressed to the writer: "Good sense is needed to use My gift. Not an open and noisy diffusion, but a slow expansion progressively wider and without any name. When your hand is stilled in peace, in the expectation of the glorious resurrection, then and only then will your name be mentioned".

The major work is a great Life of Jesus, the narration of which extends from the birth and childhood of the Virgin Mary, to Her assumption into Heaven.

Defined in the Valtortian writings as "The Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ as it was revealed to Little John", the work received the simpler title "The Poem of Jesus" which was preferred for the first edition. Later, the editor was requested to rectify this title because it had already been applied to a small volume of poetry published elsewhere, and the revised title read as "The Poem of the Man-God", as it remains to this day.

And it was "revealed" to Maria Valtorta, called "Little John". John, to place her close to the Evangelist who was the favourite disciple. Little, because of the dependence of her Work, although quite extensive, on those of the Evangelists who, in short manuscripts, enclosed what is essential.

TO PROCLAIM THE FRUITS

On 28th April 1946, Azariah dictated this advice to those of us who have received the gift of Maria Valtorta's writings:

"To the deniers, the uncertain, or the denigrators of the miracle... you may say 'I do not know who He is. I know that I was wretched, and He has healed me in soul and body.' And you can particularly make the luminous statement of the man born blind, to those who reproached him for having received his sight from a reprobate: 'I don't know if He is a sinner, but I know this alone: that I was blind and now I see... Ever since the world began, there has never been talk of someone opening the eyes of a man born blind. If the one who healed me were not God, He couldn't have done it.'

"Yes, that's how you can reply to those insinuating doubts about the spokeswoman: 'We don't know who she is. We only know that she has healed our spirits. Ever since the world began, there has never been talk of the devil having opened the eyes of one who was in sin, to the light of God. If the one who healed us were not an instrument of God, her pages would not have been able to convert us.' "