

CONCISE VIEW OF THE
WAY TO GOD; AND OF
THE STATE OF UNION;
BY MADAME GUYON

“And the glory You gave me, I have given to them; that they may be one even as we are one, (I in them and You in me,) that they may be made perfect in one.” - John 17

PART 1: ON THE WAY TO GOD

CHAPTER 1: THE FIRST STAGE: CONVERSION.

1. The first stage is the return of the soul to God, when, being truly converted, it begins to live by grace.

CHAPTER 2: THE SECOND STAGE: THE TOUCH IN THE WILL.

2. The soul then receives a touch in the will, which invites it to reflect, and tells it that God is within, and must be sought there; that He is present in the heart, and must be enjoyed there.

3. This discovery, to begin with, is the source of very great joy to the soul, as it is a pledge of happiness to come; the road it is to pursue is opened and is shown to be that of the inward life. This knowledge is the more wonderful, as it is the spring of all the happiness of the soul, and the solid foundation of interior progress; for those who tend toward God merely by the intellect, even though they may enjoy a somewhat spiritual contemplation, can never enter into intimate union if they do not leave that path and enter this of the inward touch, where the whole working is in the will.

4. Those who are led in this way, though led by blind abandonment, experience a salty knowledge. They never walk by the light of the intellect, like the former, who receive clear light to guide them, and who, having a clear view of the road, never enter those impenetrable passes of the hidden will which are reserved for the latter. The former proceed on the evidence provided by their intuitions, aided by their reason, and they do well; but the latter pursue blindly an unknown course, which, nevertheless, appears perfectly natural to them, although they have to feel their way. They go, however, with more certainty than the others, who may be misled by the light of their understanding; but these are guided by a supreme Will which conducts them however it will. And further, all the more immediate operations are performed in the centre of the soul, that is, in the three powers reduced to the unity of the will, where they are all absorbed, insensibly following the path prescribed for them.

5. These pursue the way of Faith and absolute Abandonment. They have no appetite or liberty to go any other way; all else limits and embarrasses them. They dwell in greater dryness than the others, for as their minds are attached to nothing clear, their thoughts often wander and have nothing to fix them. And as there are differences in souls, some having conscious delights, and others being drier, so

it is with those who are led by the will; the former have more zeal but less solid progress, and should restrain their eager disposition and ignore their emotions, even when they seem burning with love; the latter seem harder and less emotional, and their state appears unspiritual; but there is a delicate something in the depth of the will which nourishes them, which is, as it were, the condensed essence of what the others experience in the intellect and zeal.

6. As this support is very delicate, it often becomes imperceptible, and is easily hidden. This gives rise to great suffering, especially in times of trouble and temptation; for as the appetite and support are delicate and concealed, the will is similar, so that such souls have none of those strong wills. Their state is more level, and their way more constant; but this does not stop them having as severe and even more serious trouble than others; for nothing being done in them by impulse, everything takes place, as it were, naturally, and their feeble, hidden wills cannot be found to advance against their foes. Their faithfulness, however, often excels that of the others.

Notice the striking difference between Peter and John; one seems to overflow with zeal, and falls away at the voice of a maid-servant; the other makes no external showing, and remains faithful to the end.

7. You will ask, then, if these souls are urged on by no violent influence, but walk in blindness, do they do the will of God? They do, more truly, although they have no clear assurance; His will is engraved indelibly on their inmost souls, so that they do with cold and languid, but firm and inviolable, abandonment, what others do by the drawings of exquisite delight.

8. Thus they go on under the influence of this divine touch from one stage to another, by a faith more or less certain, and experience alternating dryness and enjoyment of the presence of God, but find that the enjoyment becomes continually deeper and less perceptible, and thus more delicate and interior. They discover, too, that in the midst of their dryness, and without any clear light, they are no less enlightened; for this state is light in itself, though dark to the one who is in it. And so true is this, that they find themselves more acquainted with the truth; I mean that truth implanted in their interior, and which causes everything to yield to the Will of God. This divine Will becomes more familiar to them, and they are able, in their un-dramatic way, to penetrate a thousand mysteries that never could have been discovered by the light of reason and knowledge. They are insensibly and gradually preparing, without

being aware of it, for the stages that are to follow.

9. The trials of this stage are alternating dryness and ease. Dryness purifies the attachment or tendency and natural taste that we have for the enjoyment of God. So that the whole of this stage is passed in these alternations of enjoyment, dryness, and ease, without many temptations, except very transitory ones, or certain faults; for at every stage the faults of nature are much more liable to overtake us in times of dryness than in times of interior joy, when the anointing of grace preserves us from a thousand evils. In the stages thus far, the soul is engaged in opposing its evil habits, and in endeavouring to overcome them by all sorts of painful self denial.

10. In the beginning, when God turned the eye of the soul inward, he so influenced it against itself that it had to cut off all its pleasures, even the most innocent, and load itself with every kind of affliction. God gives no respite to some in this regard, until the life of Nature, that is, of the exterior senses expressed in appetites, likes and dislikes, is wholly destroyed.

11. This destruction of the appetites and dislikes of the outward senses belongs to the second stage, which I have called the touch in the will, and in which the highest and greatest virtue is practised, especially when the inward drawing is vigorous and the anointing very strong. For there is no sort of method that God does not show to the soul, to enable it to conquer and overcome self in everything; so that at length, by constant practice, accompanied by the anointing, the spirit gets the upper hand, and the interior part comes under subjection without resistance. There is, then, no further trouble from this source, any more than if all external feeling had been taken away. This state is mistaken, by those who understand little, for a state of death; it is, indeed, the death of the senses, but there is yet a long way to that of the spirit.

CHAPTER 3. THE THIRD STAGE: STILLNESS AND INTERIOR SACRIFICE.

12. When we have for some time enjoyed the repose of a victory that has cost us so much trouble, and think ourselves forever relieved from an enemy whose power has been destroyed, we enter into the third stage which is a way of faith more or less strong, according to the state. We enter into a condition of alternate dryness and ease; and in this dryness, the soul perceives certain exterior weaknesses, natural defects, which, though slight, take it by surprise; it feels,

too, that the strength it had received for the struggle is dying away. This is caused by the loss of our active, inward force; for although the soul, in the second stage, imagines itself to be silent before God, it is not entirely so. It does not speak, indeed, either in heart or by mouth, but it is in an active striving after God and constant outbreathing of love, so that, being the subject of the most powerful loving activity, exerted by the Divine Love towards Himself, it is continually leaping, as it were, towards its object, and its activity is accompanied by a delightful and almost constant peace. As it is from this activity of love that we gain the strength to overcome nature, it is then that we practise the greatest virtues and most severe self denial.

13. But as this activity decays, and is lost in a loving stillness, our strength of resistance sinks and diminishes, and, as this stage advances, and the soul becomes more and more still, it becomes more and more powerless in combat. As God becomes strong within, so we become weak. Some regard this impossibility of resistance as a great temptation, but they do not see that all our labour, aided and assisted by grace, can only conquer our outward senses, after which God takes gradual possession of our interior, and becomes Himself our purifier. And as He required all our watchfulness while He continued us in loving activity, so He now requires all our faithfulness to let Him work while He begins to render Himself Lord by subjecting the flesh to the Spirit.

14. For it must be noted that all our outward perfection depends on, and must follow the inward; so that when we are employed in active devotion, however simple, we are actively engaged against ourselves just as simply.

15. The second stage destroys the outward senses, the third, the inward; and this is brought about by means of this strong stillness. But as God then works within, He seems to neglect the outward; hence the reappearance of defects, though feebly and only in a time of dryness, which we thought extinct.

16. The nearer we get to the conclusion of the third stage, the longer and more frequent are our dry patches, and the greater our weakness. This purification serves to destroy our internal feelings, as the loving activity put an end to our external, and at each stage there are alternations of dryness and enjoyment. The dryness serves to purify it from its barrenness and weakness. As soon as we cease, from inability, to practise acts of self denial he have chosen, those of

Providence take their place - the crosses which God provides according to our stage. These are not chosen by the soul; but the soul, under the interior guidance of God, receives what He chooses.

CHAPTER 4. THE FOURTH STAGE: NAKED FAITH.

17. The fourth stage is naked faith; here we have nothing but inward and outward desolation; for the one always follows the other.

18. Every stage has its beginning, progress, and consummation.

19. All that has hitherto been granted and gained with so much labour, is here gradually taken away.

20. This stage is the longest, and only ends with total death, if the soul be willing to be so desolated as to die wholly to self. For an infinite number of souls never pass the first stages, and in very few of those who reach this stage is the work completed.

21. This desolation takes place in some with violence, and although they suffer more distress than others, yet they have less reason to complain, for the very severity of their affliction is a sort of consolation. There are others who experience only a feebleness and a kind of disgust for everything, which has the appearance of being a failure in duty and unwillingness to obey.

22. We are first deprived of our voluntary works, and become unable to do what we did in the earlier stages; as this increases, we begin to feel a general inability to do anything, which, instead of diminishing, increases day by day. As this weakness and inability increases, we reach a place where we say: "For what I do is not what I want; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." (Rom. 7:15.)

23. After being deprived of everything, both inward and outward, which is not essential, work then begins on what is essential; and as the virtuous life of a Christian, which we regarded with so much complacency, disappears, we are deprived of interior comfort and support. As this support becomes weaker, the more we feel its loss. It is to be noted, however, that there is no loss except to our own consciousness, as it is still there, but without activity. If it were not hidden, the death and loss of self could not happen. But it retires within, and shuts itself up so closely that the soul is not aware of its presence.

24. Do you ask why this course is pursued? The whole object of the way so far has been to cause the soul to pass, from its complexity, to clarity without complexity; from that clarity to a clear loss of feeling; then to the cloud of of unknowing, which is a much less

attractive delight. It is vigorous to begin with and introduces the soul into what can be sensed, which is a purer and less exquisite pleasure than the first; from what can be sensed, into faith sustained and working by love; passing in this way from natural perception to the spiritual, and from the spiritual to naked faith, which, causing us to be dead to all spiritual experiences, makes us die to ourselves and pass into God, that we may live only from the life of God.

25. In the economy of grace, then, we begin with natural perception, continue with what is spiritual, and end by leading the soul gradually into its centre, and uniting it with God.

26. The more deeply this natural support fades, the more it knits the soul together, so that it cannot continue to spread among a thousand things which it can no longer either affect or even sense; and, entirely stripped, it is gradually obliged to desert even itself.

27. It is stripped without mercy, then, of everything within and without, and what is worst of all, is delivered over to temptations; and the more fully it is given up to temptation, the more completely is it deprived of strength to resist them; thus it is weakened still farther at the very time when it is subjected to more violent attacks, and finally its internal support is removed, which, while it served as a refuge, would be an evidence of the goodness of God, and of its faithfulness to itself.

28. So you may see a man pursued by a powerful adversary; he fights, and defends himself as well as he can, always managing to get nearer and nearer to a place of safety; but the longer he fights the weaker he becomes, while his opponent is getting stronger. What will he do? He will get to the door of the stronghold as quickly as he can, for there he will find help. But, on reaching it, he sees that it is closed, and finds that, far from helping him, the keepers have barricaded every way in; he must fall into the hands of his powerful enemy, whom he recognizes as his best and truest friend when, defenceless and despairing, he has given himself up.

29. Be sure, then, that this stage includes all these; the loss of every good, all sorts of weaknesses, defencelessness, no inner refuge; God himself often seems angry; and, to crown all, temptations.

30. Willingly, I think I hear you say, provided I might be sure that my will was not in harmony with the corruption of nature and the weaknesses of the senses. Ah! you would be happy; but that cannot be. As you become weak, and lack every activity of love, the will,

founded in that vigour of love, becomes weaker day by day and gradually disappears; and vanishing thus, it is certain that it takes no part in anything that happens in the man, but is separate. But as it does not show itself anywhere, it provides no consolation to the soul, but the contrary; for, no longer finding that the will resists, the soul believes it is agreeing to everything, and that it has joined with the animal will, which is the only one perceptible.

31. You will, perhaps, remember what I said before; that, at the beginning of God's loving activity, nature and the senses became, as it were, extinguished and subdued. It is true; but the spirit of self by those very victories became high-minded, more tenacious of what it considers good, and still more indomitable. God, who is determined to subdue it, uses an apparent resurrection of the nature which the soul supposed dead. But note that He does not use nature until He has removed its corruption, destroyed it and separated the superior will from what rendered it violent and criminal. He extracts the venom of the viper, and then uses it as an antidote for the spirit. Whoever comes to know the wonderful dynamic of grace and the wisdom of God in bringing man to a total sacrifice of self, will be filled with delight, and, insensible as he may be, will die with love. The little traces of it which have been revealed to my heart have often overwhelmed me.

32. Faithfulness in this stage requires us to suffer loss, to the whole extent of the designs of God, without being anxious about ourselves, sacrificing to God all our interests both for time and for eternity. Nothing must be made an excuse for reserving or retaining the slightest atom, for the least reservation is the cause of an awful loss, as it prevents our death from being total. We must let God work his absolute will, and let the winds and tempests beat on us on every side, submerged, as we may often be, beneath the waves.

33. A wonderful thing is seen here; far from being estranged by our suffering and wretched state, it is then that God appears; and if any weakness has been apparent, He gives us a token of his presence, as if to assure the soul for a moment that He was with it in its trouble. I say for a moment, for it is of no use subsequently as a support, but is rather intended to point the way and invite the soul to the further loss of self.

34. These states are not continuous in their violence; there are remissions, which, while they provide space for taking breath, make the subsequent trial more painful. For nature will use anything to

sustain life, as a drowning man will support himself in the water by clinging to the blade of a razor, without complaining about the pain it causes him, if nothing else is within reach.

CHAPTER 5. THE FIFTH STAGE: MYSTICAL DEATH.

35. Attacked thus on all sides by so many enemies, without life and without support, we can do nothing but die in the arms of Love.

When death is complete, the most terrible states cause no further trouble. We do not recognize death from the fact of having passed through all these states, but by a lack of ability to feel pain, to think of or care for self, and by our indifference to remaining there forever without manifesting the slightest sign of life. Life is evidenced by a will for or repulsion from something; but here, in this death of the soul, all things are alike. It remains dead and unaware of everything that concerns itself, and, let God reduce it to what extremity He will, feels no opposition. It has no choice between being Angel or Demon, because it has no longer any eyes for self. It is then that God has placed all its enemies beneath his footstool, and, reigning supreme, takes and possesses it more fully, as it has more completely deserted itself. But this takes place by degrees.

36. There remains for a long time, even after death, a trace of the living heat, which only gradually disappears. All states cleanse the soul, but here the process is completed.

37. We do not die spiritually once for all, as we do naturally; it happens gradually; we vibrate between life and death, being sometimes in one and sometimes in the other, until death has finally conquered life. And so it is in the resurrection; an alternate state of life and death, until life has finally overcome death.

38. Not that the new life does not come suddenly. He who was dead, finds himself living, and can never afterward doubt that he was dead and is alive again; but it is not then established; it is rather a disposition toward living than a settled state of life.

39. The first life of grace began what could be sensed, and sank continually inward toward the centre, until, having reduced the soul to unity, it caused it to die in the arms of love; for all experience this death, but each by means peculiar to himself. But the life that is now given arises from within; it is, as it were, a living seed which has always existed there, though unobserved, and which shows that the life of grace has never been wholly absent, however it may have been hidden. There it remained even in the midst of death; nor was

it less death because life was concealed in it; as the silk-worm lies long dead in the chrysalis, but contains a germ of life that awakes it to a resurrection. This new life, then, buds in the centre, and grows from there; thence it gradually extends over all the faculties and senses, impregnating them with its own life and fertility.

40. The soul, endued with this vitality, experiences infinite content; not in itself, but in God; especially when the life is well advanced.

41. But, before speaking of the effects of this life, let me say that there are some who do not pass through these painful deaths; they only experience weakness and fainting, which destroys them, and causes them to die to all.

42. Many spiritual people have given the name of death to the earlier purifications, which are, indeed, a death in relation to the life given, but not a total death. They result in one of the lives of nature, or of grace, being extinguished; but that is very different from a general extinction of all life.

43. Death has various names, according to our different ways of expression or conception. It is called a departure, a separation from self in order that we may pass into God; a loss, total and entire, of the will of the creature, which causes the soul to lack in itself, that it may exist only in God. Now, as this will is in everything that exists in the creature, however good and holy it may be, all these things must be destroyed, so that only the will of God may remain.

Everything born of the will of the flesh and the will of man must be destroyed. Then nothing but the will of God is left, which becomes the principle of the new life, and, gradually enlivening the old extinguished will, takes its place and changes it into faith.

44. From the time that the soul expires mystically, it is separated from everything that would be an obstacle to its perfect union with God; but it is not, for all that, received into God. This causes it the most extreme suffering. You will object here that, if it is wholly dead, it can no longer suffer. Let me explain.

45. The soul is dead as soon as it is separated from self; but this mystical death is not complete until it has passed into God. Until then, it suffers greatly, but its suffering is general and unclear, and is caused by the fact that it is not yet set in its proper place.

46. The suffering which precedes death is caused by our distaste for the means that produce it. This distaste is felt whenever these means recur, or grow sharper; but as we die we become more and more unaware of them, and seem to harden under the blows, until

at last death comes through an complete end of life. God unrelentingly pursued our life into all its hiding places; for it is so corrupt, that when hard pressed, it fortifies itself in its refuges, uses the holiest and most reasonable pretexts for its existence; but, being followed into its last retreat, in a few souls (alas! how few!) it has to abandon them altogether.

47. No pain then comes from the means which caused our death, which are exactly the opposite to those which used to keep us alive; the more reasonable and holy the latter appear, the more unreasonable and defiled the others look.

48. But after death - which causes the soul to depart from self, that is, lose every self-appropriation; for we never know how strongly we cling to things until they are taken away, and he who thinks that he is attached to nothing is often greatly mistaken, being bound to a thousand things, unknown to himself - after death, I repeat, the soul is entirely rid of self, but not at first received into God. There still exists a something, I know not exactly what, a form, a human remnant; but that also vanishes. It is a tarnish which is destroyed by a general, unclear suffering, having no relation to the means of death, since they are passed away and completed; but it is an uneasiness arising from being turned out of self, without being received into its great Original. The soul loses all possession of self, without which it could never be united to God; but it only gradually becomes fully possessed of Him by the new life, which is wholly divine.

CHAPTER 6. UNION WITH GOD: BUT NOT YET RECOGNIZED.

49. As soon as the soul has died in the embraces of the Lord, it is united to Him in truth without any intermediary; for in losing everything, even its treasures, it has lost the means which were in them; and even these greatest treasures were only intermediaries. So from that moment it is united to God; but does not recognize it, or enjoy the fruits of its union, until He enlivens it and becomes its life principle. A bride fainting in the arms of her husband is closely united to him, but she does not enjoy the blessedness of the union, and may even be unconscious of it; but when he has looked at her for some time, fainting from excess of love, and recalls her to life by his tender caresses, then she sees that she is has the one her soul loves, and that she is possessed by him.

Part 2

CHAPTER 1: THE RESURRECTION.

50. The soul thus possessed of God finds that He is so perfectly Lord over it, that it can no longer do anything but what He pleases and as He pleases; and this state goes on increasing. Its powerlessness is no longer painful but pleasant, because it is full of the life and power of the Divine Will.

51. The dead soul is in union, but does not enjoy its the fruits until the moment of resurrection, when God, causing it to pass into Him, gives it such pledges and assurances of the consummation of its divine marriage that it can no longer doubt: for this union is so spiritual, so refined, so divine, so intimate, that it is impossible for the soul either to conceive it or doubt it. For we may see that what we speak of is beyond imagination; these souls are not in the least imaginative, having nothing in the intellect, and are perfectly protected from deception and illusion, as everything takes place within.

52. During their journey along the way of faith, nothing was clear, for clarity is opposed to faith, and they could not experience that, having only a sort of generality as a foundation on which everything was given to them. But it is very different when the life becomes advanced in God; for though they have nothing clear for themselves, they have for others; and the light they have for others, though not always received, is the more certain as it is more immediate, and as it were natural.

53. When God raises a soul, and receives it into Himself, and the living seed, which is no other than the Life and Spirit of the Word, begins to appear, this is the revelation in it of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:16) who lives in us by the loss of the life of Adam in self.

54. The soul is thus received into God, and gradually changed and transformed into Him, as food is transformed into the one who has eaten it. All this happens without any loss of its individuality.

55. When the change begins, it is called annihilation, since our form becomes annihilated in order to take on His. This goes on constantly during life, changing the soul more and more into God, and causing it to increasingly share in the divine nature, making it unchangeable, immovable, etc. But He also renders it fruitful in, and not out of, Himself.

56. This fruitfulness extends to certain people whom God gives and attaches to the soul; giving his Love, full of Charity, to it. For the

love of these divine souls for the people thus given to them, while it is far removed from natural feeling, is infinitely stronger than the love of parents for their children, and though it appears eager and hasty, it is not, because he who shows it is only following the movement impressed on him.

57. To make this clear, we must know that God did not deprive the senses and faculties of their life to leave them dead; for though there might be life in the centre of the soul, they would remain dead if that life were not also given to them. It increases by degrees, enlivens all the powers and senses which, until then, had remained barren and unfruitful, enlarges them in proportion to its gift, and renders them active, but with an activity derived and regulated from God, according to his own designs. People in a dying or dead condition must not condemn the activity of such souls, for they could never have been put in divine motion if they had not passed through the most wonderful death. During the whole period of faith, the soul remains motionless; but after God has infused His divine activity into it, its sphere is vastly extended; but, great as it may be, it cannot do anything of itself.

CHAPTER 2: THE LIFE IN GOD.

58. There is no more to be said here of stages; glory is all that remains, every means is left behind, and the future consists in our enjoying infinite life more and more abundantly. (John 10:10.) As God transforms the soul into Himself, his life is given to it more plentifully. The love of God for the creature cannot be understood, and his care cannot be explained; some souls He pursues ceaselessly, gets in front of them, sits Himself at their door, and delights Himself in being with them and in loading them with the marks of his love. He impresses this chaste, pure, and tender love on the heart. St. Paul and St. John the Evangelist felt much of this maternal affection. But to be as I have described it, it must be given to the soul in the state of grace of which I have just spoken; otherwise, such emotions are purely natural.

59. The prayer of the state of faith is an absolute silence of all the powers of the soul, and a cessation of every working, however delicate, especially toward its conclusion. The soul in that state, perceiving no more prayer, and not being able to set apart fixed times for it, since all such exercises are taken away, is led to think that it has absolutely lost all kind of devotion. But when life returns,

prayer returns with it, and accompanied by a marvellous ease; and as God takes possession of the senses and faculties, its devotion becomes sweet, gentle, and very spiritual, but always to God. Its former devotion caused it to sink within itself, that it might enjoy God, but what it now has draws it out of self, that it may be more and more lost and changed in God.

60. This difference is quite remarkable, and can only be gained by experience. The soul is silent in the state of death, but its stillness is barren, and accompanied by a frantic rambling which leaves no mark of silence save the impossibility of addressing God, either with the lips or the heart. But after the resurrection, its silence is fruitful and attended by a pure and refined anointing, which is deliciously diffused over the senses, but with such a purity, that it causes no stay and contracts no taint.

61. It is now impossible for the soul to take what it has not, or to put off what it has. It receives willingly whatever impressions are made on it. Its state, however overwhelming, would be free from suffering, if God, who moves it towards certain free things, gave them the necessary capacity. But as their state will not bear it, it becomes necessary that what God wills they should have, should be given by means of suffering.

62. It would be wrong for such people to say that they do not want these means; that they desire God only. He is anxious that they should die to a certain interior support of self, which causes them to say that they desire God only; and if they were to reject these means they would withdraw themselves from the order of God, and arrest their progress. But, being given simply as means, though fruitful in grace and virtue, however secret and concealed, they finally disappear when the soul finds itself united with the means in God, and He communicates Himself directly. Then God withdraws the means, on which he no longer impresses any movement in the direction of the person to whom they are attached; because it might then serve as a support, its utility being at least recognized. The soul can then no longer have what it had, and remains in its first death in respect to them, though still very closely united.

63. In this state of resurrection comes that indescribable silence, by which we not only exist in God, but commune with Him. In a soul thus dead to its own working, and general and fundamental self-appropriation, it becomes a flux and reflux of divine communion, with nothing to sully its purity; for there is nothing to hinder it.

64. The soul then shares in the indescribable communion of the Trinity, where the Father of spirits imparts his spiritual creativity, and makes it one spirit with Himself. Here it communes with other souls, if they are sufficiently pure to receive its communications in silence, according to their stage and state; here indescribable secrets are revealed, not by a momentary illumination, but in God himself, where they are all hid, the soul not possessing them for itself, nor being ignorant of them.

65. Although I have said that the soul then has something clear, yet it is not clear in reference to itself, but to those it speaks with; for what it says is said naturally and without forethought, but seems extraordinary to the hearers, who, not finding the thing in themselves, though it may be there, consider it clear and wonderful, or perhaps fanatical. Souls that are still dwelling among the gifts have clear and momentary light, but these have only a general light, without defined beams, which is God himself; whence they draw whatever they need, which is clear whenever it is needed by those they speak with, and without any of it remaining with them afterwards.

CHAPTER 3. THE TRANSFORMATION.

66. There are a thousand things that might be said about the inward and celestial life of the soul thus full of life in God, which He dearly cherishes for Himself, and which He covers externally with humiliation, because He is a jealous God. But it would need a book. God is the life and soul of this soul, which thus continually lives in God as a fish in the sea in inexpressible happiness, though loaded with the sufferings which God lays on it for others.

67. It has become so simple, especially when its transformation is far advanced, that it goes its way without a thought for any creature or for itself. It has but one object, to do the will of God. But as it has to do with many people who cannot attain this state, some of them cause it suffering by urging it to have a care for self, to take precautions, and so on, which it cannot do; and others by their lack of obedience to the Will of God.

68. The crosses of such souls are the most severe, and God keeps them under the most abject humiliations and a feeble exterior, though they are his delight. Then Jesus Christ gives Himself in all his states, and the soul is clothed with both his inclinations and sufferings. It understands what man has cost Him, what his

faithlessness has made Him suffer, what is the redemption of Jesus Christ, and how He has borne his children.

69. The transformation is recognized by the lack of distinction between God and the soul; it is no longer able to separate itself from God; everything is equally God, because it has passed into its Original Source, is reunited to its ALL, and changed into Him. But it is enough for me to sketch the outline of what you want to know; experience will teach you the rest, and having shown you what I ought to be to you, you may judge of what I am in our Lord.

70. To the degree that its transformation is complete, the soul finds a more extended quality in itself. Everything is expanded, God making it share his infinity; so that it often finds itself immense, and the whole earth appears as nothing compared with this wonderful breadth. Whatever is in the order and will of God expands it; everything else contracts it; and this contraction restrains it from fainting. As the will is what works the transformation, and the centre is nothing else but all the faculties united in the will, so the more the soul is transformed, the more its will is changed and passed into God's, and the more God himself wills for the soul. The soul acts and works in this divine will, which is thus substituted for its own so naturally that it cannot tell whether the will of the soul has become the will of God, or the will of God become the will of the soul.

71. God often exacts strange sacrifices from souls thus transformed in Him; but it costs them nothing, for they will sacrifice everything to Him without reluctance. The smaller sacrifices cost the most, and the greater ones the least, for they are not needed until the soul is in a state to grant them without difficulty. This is what is said of Jesus Christ when he came into the world; "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the scroll of the book it is written of me; I delight to do your will, O God; your love is in my heart." (Psalm 9:7,8.) As soon as Christ comes into any soul to become its living principle, He says the same thing of it; He becomes the eternal Priest who unceasingly fulfils his priestly office in the soul. This is sublime indeed, and continues until the victim is carried to glory.

72. God destines these souls to help others in the most tangled paths; for, having no longer any anxiety about themselves, and having nothing to lose, God can use them to bring others into the way of his pure, naked and assured will. Those who are still self-possessed could not be used for this purpose; for, not having yet

entered into a state where they follow the will of God blindly for themselves, but always mingling it with their own reasonings and false wisdom, they are not in a condition to withhold nothing in following it blindly for others. When I say withhold nothing, I mean of what God desires in the present moment; for He often does not let us point out to a person all that hinders him, and what we see must happen to him, except in general terms, because he cannot bear it. And though we may sometimes say hard things, as Christ did to the Capernaïtes, He nevertheless gives a secret strength to bear it; at least He does so to the souls He has chosen solely for Himself; and this is the touchstone.