

A Short and Easy
Method of Prayer
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THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

This little treatise, conceived in great simplicity, was not originally intended for publication: it was written for a few individuals, who wanted to love God with their whole heart; some of whom, because of the profit they received in reading the manuscript, wished to obtain copies of it; and on this account alone, it was committed to the press. It still remains in its original simplicity, without expressing an opinion on the various Divine Leadings of others: and we submit the whole to the judgment of those who are skilled and experienced in Divine matters; asking them, however, not to decide without first entering into the main design of the Author, which is to induce the world to love God and to serve Him with comfort and success, in a simple and easy manner, adapted to those who are unqualified for learned and deep researches, and are, indeed, incapable of anything but a hearty desire to be truly devoted to God.

An unprejudiced reader may find hidden under the most common expressions, a secret anointing, which will excite him to seek after that Sovereign Good, whom all should wish to enjoy.

In speaking of the attainment of perfection, the word Easiness is used, because God is indeed found easily when we seek Him within ourselves. But, in contradiction to this, some perhaps may urge that passage in St. John, "you shall seek me, and shall not find me" (John 7:34). The apparent difficulty, however, is removed by another passage, where He, who cannot contradict Himself, has said to all, "Seek and you shall find" (Matt. 7:7). It is true, indeed, that he who would seek God, and is yet unwilling to forsake his sins, shall not find Him, because he seeks not aright; and therefore it is added, "you shall die in your sins." On the other hand, he who diligently seeks God in his heart, and sincerely forsakes sin so that he may draw near to Him, shall infallibly find Him.

A life of devotion appears so formidable, and the Spirit of Prayer of such difficult attainment, that most people are discouraged from taking a single step towards it. The difficulties inseparable from all great undertakings are, indeed, either nobly overcome, or remain in

all their terrors, just as success is the object of despair or hope. I have therefore tried to show the facility of the method proposed in this treatise, the great advantages to be derived from it, and the certainty of their attainment by those that faithfully persevere.

O were we once truly aware of the goodness of God toward His poor creatures, and of His infinite desire to communicate Himself to them, we should not allow imaginary difficulties to put us off us, nor despair of obtaining that good which He is so earnest to give: "He, that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). But we lack courage and perseverance; we have both to a high degree in our temporal concerns, but lack them in "the one thing needful" (Luke 10:42).

If any think that God is not easily to be found in this way of Simple Love and Pure Adherence, let them not, on my testimony, alter their opinion, but rather try it, and their own experience will convince them that the reality far exceeds all my representations of it.

Beloved reader, study this little book with a humble, sincere and candid spirit, and not with an inclination to argue and criticize, and you will not fail to reap some degree of profit from it. It was written with a hearty desire that you might wholly devote yourself to God; receive it, then, with a similar desire for your own perfection: for nothing more is intended by it than to invite the simple and child-like to approach their FATHER, who delights in the humble confidence of His children, and is grieved at the smallest instance of their unbelief or distrust. With a sincere desire, therefore, to forsake sin, seek nothing from the unpretending method here proposed but the LOVE OF God, and you shall undoubtedly obtain it.

Without setting up our opinions above those of others, we mean only, with truth and candour, to declare, from our own experience and the experience of others, the happy effects produced by thus SIMPLY FOLLOWING OUR LORD.

As this treatise was intended only to instruct in Prayer, there are many things which we respect and esteem, totally omitted, as not immediately relevant to our main subject: it is, however, certain, that

nothing will be found here to offend, provided it be read in the spirit with which it was written; and it is still more certain, that those who make trial of the way in earnest, will find we have written the Truth. It is You alone, O Holy Jesus, who loves simplicity and innocence, “and whose delight is to dwell with the children of men” (Prov. 8:3), with those who are, indeed, willing to become “little children”; it is You alone, who can render this little work of any value by imprinting it on the hearts of all who read it, and leading them to seek You within themselves, where You rest as in the manger, waiting to receive proofs of their love, and to give them testimony of Yours. Yet alas! They may still lose these unspeakable advantages by their negligence and insensibility! But it belongs to You, O You Uncreated Love! You Silent and Eternal Word! It belongs to You, to awaken, attract, and convert: to make Yourself be heard, tasted, and beloved! I know You can do it, and I trust You will do it by this humble work which belongs entirely to You, proceeds wholly from You, and leads only to You! And, O most Gracious and adorable Saviour!
To You be all the Glory!

CHAPTER I; The Universal Call to Prayer

What a dreadful delusion has prevailed over the greater part of mankind, in supposing that they are not called to a state of prayer “whereas all are capable of prayer, and are called to it, as all are called to and are capable of salvation.”

Prayer is the application of the heart to God, and the internal exercise of love. St. Paul has enjoined us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17), and our Lord says, “I say to you all, watch and pray” (Mark 13:33, 37): all therefore may, and all ought to practice prayer. I grant that meditation is attainable but by few, for few are capable of it, and therefore, my beloved brethren who are thirsty for salvation, meditative prayer is not the prayer which God requires of you, nor which we would recommend.

Let all pray we should live by prayer, as we should live by love; “I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich” (Rev 3:8), this is much more easily obtained than we can conceive. Come, all you that are thirsty, to these living waters”; nor lose your precious moments in “hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns that will hold no water” (John 7:37; Jer 2:13), Come, you famished souls, who find nothing to feed on, come, and you shall be fully satisfied!

Come, you poor afflicted ones, who groan beneath your load of wretchedness and pain, and you shall find ease and comfort! Come, you sick, to your Physician, and be not fearful of approaching Him because you are filled with diseases; expose them to His view and they shall be healed!

Children, draw near to your Father, and He will embrace you in the arms of love! Come, you poor, stray, wandering sheep, return to your Shepherd! Come, sinners, to your Saviour! Come, you dull, ignorant, and illiterate, you who think yourselves the most incapable of prayer! you are more peculiarly called and adapted to it. Let all without exception come, for Jesus Christ has called all.

Yet let not those come who are without a heart; they are not asked; for there must be a heart, that there may be love. But who is without a heart? Come, then, give this heart to God; and here learn how to make the donation.

All who are desirous of prayer may easily pray, enabled by those

ordinary graces and gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT which are common to all men.

Prayer is the guide to perfection and the sovereign good; it delivers us from every vice, and obtains us every virtue; for the one great means to become perfect, is to walk in the presence of God: He Himself has said, “walk in my presence and be perfect” (Gen. 17:1). It is by prayer alone that we are brought into this presence, and maintained in it without interruption.

You must then learn a sort of prayer, which may be exercised at all times; which does not get in the way of outward employments; and which may be equally practised by princes, kings, elders, deacons and magistrates, soldiers and children, tradesmen, labourers, women and sick people: it cannot, therefore, be the prayer of the head, but of the heart; not a prayer of the understanding alone, which is so limited in its operations that it can have only one object at a time; but the prayer of the heart is not interrupted by the exercises of reason: indeed nothing can interrupt this prayer, but irregular and disordered affections: and when once we have tasted of God, and the sweetness of His love, we shall find it impossible to relish anything but Himself. Nothing is so easily obtained as the possession and enjoyment of God, for “in him we live, move, and have our being”; and He is more desirous to give Himself into us, than we can be to receive Him. All consists in the manner of seeking Him; and to seek aright, is easier and more natural to us than breathing. Though you think yourselves ever so stupid, dull, and incapable of sublime attainments, yet, by prayer, you may live in God Himself with less difficulty or interruption than you live in the vital air. Will it not then be highly sinful to neglect prayer? But this I trust you will not, when you have learnt the method, which is exceedingly easy.

CHAPTER II; The Method of Prayer

There are two ways of introducing a soul into prayer, which should for some time be pursued; the one is Meditation, the other is Reading accompanied with Meditation.

Meditative Reading is choosing some important practical or spiritual truth, always preferring the practical, and proceeding like this: whatever truth you have chosen, read only a small bit of it, aiming to taste and digest it, to extract its essence and substance, and go no further while any savour or relish remains in the passage: when this subsides, take up your book again and proceed as before, seldom reading more than half a page at a time, for it is not the quantity that is read, but the manner of reading, that benefits us.

Those who read fast reap no more advantage than a bee would by only skimming over the surface of the flower, instead of waiting to penetrate into it, and extract its nectar. Much reading is rather for scholastic subjects than divine truths: indeed, to receive real profit from spiritual books, we must read as I have described; and I am certain, if that method were pursued, we should become gradually used to, and more fully disposed for prayer.

Meditation, which is the other method, is to be practised at an appropriate season, and not while reading. I believe the best manner of meditating is as follows: - When, by an act of lively faith, you are placed in the Presence of God, remember some truth that contains substance and food; pause gently and sweetly on it, not to analyse it, but merely to calm and fix the mind: for you must observe, that your principal exercise should ever be the Presence of God; your subject, therefore, should rather serve to settle the mind, than exercise the understanding. From this procedure, it will necessarily follow, that the lively faith in a God immediately present in our inmost soul, will produce an eager and fervent pressing inwardly into ourselves, and a restraining all our senses from wandering: this serves to remove us quickly from numerous distractions, to remove us far from external objects, and to bring us near to our God, Who is only to be found in our inmost centre, which is the Holy of Holies where He dwells. He has even promised "to come and make his abode with him that does his will" (John 14:23). St Augustine accuses himself of wasting

his time, by not having from the first sought God in this manner of prayer. When we are thus fully introverted, and warmly penetrated throughout with a living sense of the Divine Presence; when the senses are all recollected, and withdrawn from the circumference to the centre, and the soul is sweetly and silently focused on the truths we have read, not in reasoning, but in feeding on them, and in animating the will by affection, rather than fatiguing the understanding by study; when, I say, the affections are in this state, which, however difficult it may appear at first, is, as I shall show later, easily attainable; we must allow them sweetly to rest, and peacefully to drink in what they have tasted: for as a person may enjoy the flavour of the finest food while chewing it, yet receive no nourishment from it, if he does not stop chewing and swallow the food; so, when our affections are kindled, if we try to stir them up more, we put out their flame, and the soul is deprived of its nourishment; we should, therefore, in stillness and rest, with respect, confidence and love, swallow the blessed food we have tasted: this method is, indeed, highly necessary, and will advance the soul further in a short time, than any other in a course of years. I have mentioned that our direct and principal exercise should consist in the contemplation of the Divine Presence: we should be also very watchful and diligent in recalling our wandering senses, as the most easy method of overcoming distractions; for a direct contest and opposition only serves to irritate and make them worse; whereas, by sinking down under a sense and perception of a present God, and by simply turning inwards, we wage insensibly a very advantageous, though indirect war with them. It is proper here to caution beginners against wandering from truth to truth, and from subject to subject: the right way to penetrate every divine truth, to enjoy its full relish, and to imprint it on the heart, is dwelling on it whilst its savour continues. Though recollection is difficult in the beginning, from the habit the soul has acquired of being always away from home; yet, when by the violence it has done itself, it becomes used to it, it will soon be perfectly easy, and become delightful. Such is the experimental taste and sense of His Presence, and such the effect of those graces which God gives, Whose One Will towards His creatures is to communicate Himself to them!

CHAPTER III; The First Degree of Prayer

Those who have not learnt to read, are not, on that account, excluded from prayer; for the Great Book which teaches all things, and which is legible as well internally as externally, is Jesus Christ Himself.

The method they should practise is this: They should first learn this fundamental truth, that “the kingdom of God is within them” (Luke 17:21), and that it is there, only it must be sought.

It is the duty of the Clergy to instruct their parishioners in prayer, as much as in their catechism.

It is true, they tell them the reason they were created; but should they not also give them sufficient instructions how they may get there?

They should be taught to begin by an act of profound adoration and humbling before God; and closing the physical eyes, aim to open those of the soul: they should then collect themselves inwardly, and, by a lively faith in God, as dwelling within them, pierce into the Divine Presence; not letting the senses wander, but keeping them under control as much as possible.

They should then repeat the LORD'S Prayer in their native tongue, pondering a little upon the meaning of the words, and the infinite willingness of that God Who dwells within them, to become, indeed, their Father. In this state let them pour out their wants before Him; and when they have said the endearing word, Father, remain a few moments in a respectful silence, waiting to have the will of this their heavenly Father shown to them.

Again, seeing themselves in the state of a feeble child, bruised by repeated falls, and grubby, without strength to keep up, or ability to wash himself, they should lay their situation open to their Father's view in humble confusion; now sighing out a few words of love and sorrow, and again sinking into profound silence before Him. Then, continuing the LORD'S Prayer, let them ask this King of Glory to reign in them, yielding to His love the just claim He has over them, and giving themselves wholly to His divine government.

If they feel an inclination to peace and silence, let them discontinue the words of the prayer so long as this sensation holds; and when it subsides, go on with the second petition, “your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven!” with which these humble supplicants must beg God

to do, in them, and by them, all His will; and must surrender their hearts and freedom into His hands, to be disposed of as He pleases. And finding that the best employment of the will is to love, they should desire to love God with all their strength, and beg Him for His pure love; but all this sweetly and peacefully: and so of the rest of the prayer, in which the pastors may instruct them. But they should not overburden themselves with frequent repetitions of set forms or studied prayers (Matt. 6:7); for the LORD'S Prayer, once repeated as I have just described, will produce abundant fruit.

At other times they should place themselves as sheep before their Shepherd, looking up to Him for their true substantial food: "O Divine Shepherd, You feed your flock with Yourself, and are, indeed, their daily nourishment!" They may also tell Him the needs of their families: but all upon this principle, and in this one great view of faith, that God is within them.

The ideas we form of the Divine Being fall infinitely short of what He is: a lively faith in His presence is sufficient: for we must not form any image of the Deity; though we may of the Second Person in the ever-blessed TRINITY, seeing Him in the various states of His Incarnation, from His Birth to His Crucifixion, or in some other state or mystery, provided the soul always seeks for those views in its inmost ground or centre.

Again, we may look to Him as our Physician, and present to His healing influence all our illnesses; but always without violence or agitation, and from time to time with pauses of silence, that being mixed with the action, the silence may be gradually extended, and our own exertion lessened; till at length, by continually yielding to GOD'S operations, they gain the complete ascendancy; as shall be explained later.

When the Divine Presence is granted us, and we gradually relish silence and repose, this experimental feeling and taste of the Presence of God introduces the soul into the second degree of prayer, which, by proceeding in the manner I have described, is attainable by the illiterate as well as the learned: some favoured souls, indeed, experience it, even from the beginning.

CHAPTER IV; The Second Degree of Prayer

Some call the second degree of prayer, "The Prayer of Contemplation," "The Prayer of Faith and Stillness," and others call it, "The Prayer of Simplicity." I shall here use this latter term, as being more accurate than the others, which imply a much more exalted state of prayer than I am now speaking of.

When the soul has been for some time exercised in the way I have mentioned, it finds that it is gradually enabled to approach God easily; that recollection is attended with much less difficulty; and that prayer becomes easy, sweet and delightful; it knows that this is the true way of finding God; and feels "his name is as ointment poured forth" (Cant. 1-3). But the method must now be altered, and that which I prescribe, followed with courage and fidelity, without being disturbed at the difficulties we may encounter in it.

First, as soon as the soul by faith places itself in the Presence of God, and becomes recollected before Him, let it remain thus for a little time in a profound and respectful silence.

But if, at the beginning, in forming the act of faith, it feels some little pleasing sense of the Divine Presence; let it remain there without being troubled for a subject, and proceed no further, but carefully cherish this sensation while it continues: as soon as it goes away, the will may be excited by some tender affection; and if by the first moving, it finds itself back in sweet peace, let it stay there: the smothered fire must be gently fanned; but as soon as it is kindled, we must cease that effort, lest we extinguish it by our own activity.

I would warmly recommend it to all, never to finish prayer, without remaining some little time after in a respectful silence. It is also of the greatest importance for the soul to go to prayer with courage, and such a pure and disinterested love, as seeks nothing from God, but the ability to please Him, and to do His will: for a servant who only works in hope of the reward, is unworthy of all reward.

Go then to prayer, not that you may enjoy spiritual delights, but that you may be either full or empty, just as it pleases God; this will preserve you in an evenness of spirit, in hard times as well as in good times, and prevent your being surprised at dry times or of the apparent indifference of God.

CHAPTER V; Of Spiritual Aridity

Though God has no other desire than to impart Himself to the loving soul that seeks Him, yet He often conceals Himself, so that the soul may be roused from sloth, and impelled to seek Him with fidelity and love. But with what abundant goodness does He recompense the faithfulness of His beloved? And how sweetly are these apparent withdrawals of Himself succeeded by the consoling caresses of love? At these times we tend to believe, either that it proves our fidelity, and causes a greater warmth of affection, to seek Him by an exertion of our own strength and activity; or, that this exertion will induce Him to come to us more quickly. No, no, my dear souls, believe me, this is not the right procedure in this degree of prayer; with patient love, with self-abasement and humiliation, with the reiterated breathings of an ardent but peaceful affection, and with silence full of the most profound respect, you must wait the return of the Beloved. Thus only you will demonstrate that it is Himself alone, and His good pleasure, that you seek; and not the selfish delights of your own sensations. Hence it is said, “Be not impatient in the time of dryness and obscurity; suffer the suspension and delays of the consolations of God; cleave to him, and wait on him patiently, that your life may increase and be renewed” (Eccles. ii. 2, 3).

So be patient in prayer, though, during life, you can do nothing but wait the return of the Beloved, in deep humiliation, calm contentment, and patient resignation to His will.

And yet how this most excellent prayer may be intermingled with the sighings of plaintive love! This conduct, indeed, is most pleasing to the heart of JESUS; and, above all others, will, as it were, compel Him to return.

CHAPTER VI; Of Self-Surrender

We should now begin to abandon and give up our whole existence to God, from the strong and positive conviction, that the occurrence of every moment is agreeable to His immediate will and permission, and just such as our state requires. This conviction will make us resigned in all things; and accept all that happens, not as from people, but as from God Himself.

But I urge you, my dearly beloved, who sincerely wish to give up yourselves to God, that after you have made the donation, don't snatch yourselves back again: remember, a gift once presented, is no longer at the disposal of the donor.

Abandonment is a matter of the greatest importance in our process; it is the key to the inner court; so that whosoever knows truly how to abandon himself, soon becomes perfect: we must, therefore, continue steadfast and immovable in it, nor listen to the voice of natural reason. Great faith produces great abandonment: we must confide in God "hoping against hope" (Rom. 4:18).

Abandonment is casting off all selfish care, that we may be altogether at the Divine Disposal. All Christians are exhorted to this resignation: for it is said to all, "Be not anxious for tomorrow, for your Heavenly Father knows all that is necessary for you" (Matt. 20:25). "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:6). "Commit your ways to the Lord, and your thoughts shall be established" (Prov. 16:3). "Commit your ways to the Lord, and he himself will bring it to pass" (Ps. 36:5).

Our abandonment then should be as fully applied to external as internal things, giving up all our concerns into the hands of God, forgetting ourselves, and thinking only of Him; by which the heart will remain always disengaged, free, and at peace. It is practised by continually losing our own will in the will of God; by renouncing every particular inclination as soon as it arises, however good it may appear, that we may stand in indifference with respect to ourselves, and only will that which God from eternity has willed; by being resigned in all things, whether for soul or body, whether for time or eternity; by leaving what is past in oblivion, what is to come to Providence, and devoting the present moment to God. which brings with itself GOD'S

eternal order, and is as infallible a declaration to us of His will as it is inevitable and common to all; by attributing nothing that befalls us to the creature, but regarding all things in God, and looking upon all, excepting only our sins, as infallibly proceeding from Him. Surrender yourselves, then, to be led and disposed of just as God pleases, with respect both to your outward and inward state.

CHAPTER VII; Of Sufferings

Be patient under all the sufferings which God is pleased to send you: if your love to Him be pure, you will not seek Him less on Calvary, than on Tabor; and, surely, He should be as much loved on that as on this, since it was on Calvary He made the greater display of His Love for you.

Don't be like those, who give themselves to Him at one season, and withdraw from Him at another: they give themselves only to be caressed; and take themselves back again, when they come to be crucified, or at least turn for consolation to the creature.

No, beloved souls, you will not find consolation in anything except the love of the Cross, and in total abandonment: "Whoever favours not the Cross, favours not the things of God" (Matt. 16:23). It is impossible to love God without loving the Cross; and a heart that favours the Cross, finds the bitterest things to be sweet: "A famished soul finds bitter things sweet" (Job 6:1) because it finds itself hungering for God, in proportion as it hungers for the Cross. God gives the Cross, and the Cross gives us God.

We may be assured, that there is an internal advancement, where there is an advancement in the way of the Cross: Abandonment and the Cross go hand in hand together.

As soon as suffering presents itself, and you feel opposition to it, resign yourself immediately to God, and give yourself up to Him in sacrifice; you shall find, that, when the Cross arrives, it will not be so very heavy, because you had prepared yourself to receive it willingly. This, however, does not prevent your feeling its weight as some have imagined; for when we do not feel the Cross, we do not suffer it. A sensibility of sufferings is a principal part of the sufferings themselves. JESUS CHRIST Himself was willing to suffer its utmost rigours. We often bear the Cross in weakness, at other times in strength; all should be equal to us in the will of God.

CHAPTER VIII; Of Mysteries

It may be objected, that, by this method, we shall have no mysteries imprinted on our minds: but it is quite the reverse; for it is the peculiar means of imparting them to the soul. JESUS CHRIST, to whom we are abandoned, and whom “we follow as the way, whom we hear as the truth, and who animates us as the life” (John 14:6) in imprinting Himself on the soul, impresses the characters of His different states; and to bear all the states of JESUS CHRIST is far more sublime than merely to think about them. St. Paul bore in his body the states of JESUS CHRIST: “I bear in my body,” says he, “the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Gal. 6:17), but he does not say that he thought a lot about them.

In our acts of resignation, JESUS CHRIST often communicates some peculiar views or revelations of His states: these we should thankfully receive, and dispose ourselves for what appears to be His will. Indeed, having no other choice, but that of ardently reaching after Him, of dwelling ever with Him, and of sinking into nothingness before Him, we should accept all He gives, whether obscurity or illumination, fruitfulness or barrenness, weakness or strength, sweetness or bitterness, temptations, distractions, pain, weariness, or doubt; and none of all these should, for one moment, slow us down.

God engages some, for whole years, in the contemplation and enjoyment of a particular mystery; the simple view or contemplation of which gathers the soul inward, provided it be faithful: but as soon as God is pleased to withdraw this view from the soul, it should freely yield to the deprivation.

Some are very uneasy at feeling their inability to meditate on certain mysteries; but this unease has no foundation, since an affectionate attachment to God includes every sort of devotion: for whoever, in rest and quiet, is united to God alone, is, indeed, most excellently and effectually applied to every divine mystery: the Love of God includes, in itself, the love of all that relates to Him.

CHAPTER IX; Of Virtue

It is thus we acquire virtue, easily and certainly; for, as God is the fountain and principle of all virtue, we possess all in possessing Him; and in the measure that we approach this, we rise into the most eminent virtues. For all virtue is a mask, an outside appearance changeable as our clothes, if it does not spring up and issue from within; and then, indeed, it is genuine, essential, and permanent: “The beauty of the King's daughter proceeds from within” says David (Ps. 45: 14). These souls, above all others, practise virtue in the most eminent degree, though they don't aim at virtue in particular; God, to whom they are united, carries them to the most extensive practice of it; He is very jealous over them, and prohibits the taste of any pleasure but Himself.

What a hungering for sufferings have those souls, who thus glow with Divine Love! how prone to fall into excessive austerity, were they permitted to pursue their own inclinations! They think of nothing but how to please their Beloved: as their self-love reduces, they neglect and forget themselves; and as their love to God increases, so do self-detestation and disregard to the creature.

O, if this easy method were acquired, a method so suited to all, to the dull and ignorant as well as to the acute and learned, how easily would the whole Church of God be reformed! Love only is required: “Love;” says St. Augustine, “and then do what you please.” For when we truly love, we cannot have so much as a will to anything that might offend the Object of our affections.

CHAPTER X; Of Mortification

I will even say that, in any other way, it is almost impossible to acquire a perfect mortification of the senses and passions.

The reason is obvious; the soul gives vigour and energy to the senses, and the senses raise and stimulate the passions: a dead body has neither sensations nor passions, because its connection with the soul is dissolved.

All efforts to correct the exterior push the soul yet further outward into what it is so warmly and zealously engaged in. It is in these matters that its powers are dispersed: for being directed to externals, it strengthens the very senses it is aiming to subdue. For the senses have no other spring to derive their vigour from but the application of the soul to themselves; the degree of their life and activity is proportional to the degree of attention which the soul gives them; and this life of the senses stirs up and provokes the passions, instead of suppressing or subduing them: self-discipline may, indeed, weaken the body, but, for the reasons just mentioned, can never take off the keenness of the senses, or lessen their activity.

The only method to effect this is inward recollection; by which the soul is turned wholly and altogether inward, to possess a PRESENT God. If the soul directs all its vigour and energy towards this centre of its being, this simple act separates and withdraws it from the senses; exercising all its powers internally leaves them faint and impotent; and the nearer it draws to God the further is it separated from the senses, and the less are the passions influenced by them.

Hence it is, that those, in whom the attractions of grace are very powerful, find the outward man altogether weak and feeble, and even liable to fainting. I do not mean by this to discourage self-discipline; for it should always accompany prayer, according to the strength and state of the person, or as obedience will allow. But I say that self-discipline should not be our principal exercise; nor should we prescribe ourselves self-disciplines, but follow simply and only the internal attractions of grace; and being possessed and occupied with the Divine Presence (without thinking particularly on self-discipline) God will enable us to do it all; and surely He will give no relaxation to those who abide faithful in their abandonment to Him, until He has

put to death in them everything that remains.

We have only then to continue steadfast in the utmost attention to God, and all things will be rightly performed. All are not capable of outward self-disciplines, but all are capable of this. In the discipline of the eye and ear, which continually supply the busy imagination with new objects, there is little danger of falling into excess: but God will teach us this also, and we have only to follow where His Spirit guides. The soul has a double advantage by proceeding thus, for, in withdrawing from outward objects, it draws nearer to God; and in approaching Him, besides the secret sustaining and preserving power and virtue received, it is more removed from sin, the nearer the approach is made; so that turning to Him becomes habitual.

CHAPTER XI; Of Conversion

"Be truly converted to that God from whom you have so deeply revolted" (Isa. 31:6). To be truly converted is to turn wholly from the creature, and turn wholly to God.

For the attainment of salvation it is absolutely necessary that we should forsake outward sin and turn to righteousness: but this alone is not perfect conversion, which consists in a total change of the whole man from an outward to an inward life.

When the soul is once turned to God a wonderful ease is found in continuing steadfast in conversion; and the longer it remains thus converted, the nearer it approaches, and the more firmly it adheres to God; and the nearer it draws to Him, of necessity it is the further removed from the creature, which is so contrary to Him: so that it is so effectually established and rooted in its conversion that it becomes habitual, and, as it were, natural.

Now we must not suppose that this is effected by a violent exertion of its own powers; for it is not capable of, nor should it attempt any other co-operation with Divine Grace, than that of determining to withdraw itself from external objects and to turn inwards: after which it has nothing further to do than to continue steadfast in adherence to God.

God has an attractive virtue which draws the soul more and more powerfully to Himself, the nearer it approaches Him, and, in attracting, He purifies and refines it; the soul co-operates with the attractions of God, by a free and affectionate correspondence. This kind of introversion is both easy and effective, advancing the soul naturally and without constraint, because God Himself is its centre. Every centre has a powerfully attractive virtue; and the more pure and exalted it is, the stronger and more irresistible are its attractions. But besides the potent magnetism of the centre itself, there is, in every creature, a corresponding tendency to re-union with its peculiar centre which is vigorous and active in proportion to the spirituality and perfection of the subject.

As soon as anything is turned towards its centre, its own gravitation draws and accelerates it to it, unless it be withheld by some obstacle: a stone held in the hand is no sooner dropped than by its own weight it

falls to the earth as to its centre; so also water and fire, when unobstructed, tend and flow incessantly to their principle or centre. Now, when the soul, by its efforts to abandon outward objects, and gather itself inwards, is brought into the influence of this central tendency, without any other exertion, it falls gradually by the weight of Divine Love into its proper centre; and the more passive and tranquil it remains, and the freer from self-motion and self-exertion, the more rapidly it advances, because the energy of the central attractive virtue is unobstructed and has full liberty for action. All our care and attention should, therefore, be to acquire inward recollection: nor let us be discouraged by the pains and difficulties we encounter in this exercise, which will soon be recompensed, on the part of our God, by such abundant supplies of grace as will render the exercise perfectly easy, provided we be faithful in meekly withdrawing our hearts from outward distractions and occupations, and returning to our centre with affections full of tenderness and serenity. When at any time the passions are turbulent, a gentle retreat inwards to a Present God, easily deadens and pacifies them; and any other way of contending with them rather irritates than eases them.

CHAPTER XII; Of the Presence of God

The soul that is faithful in the exercise of love and adherence to God above described, is astonished to feel Him gradually taking possession of their whole being: it now enjoys a continual sense of that Presence, which is become as it were natural to it; and this, as well as prayer, is the result of habit. The soul feels an unusual serenity gradually being diffused through all its faculties; and silence now wholly constitutes its prayer; whilst God communicates an intuitive love, which is the beginning of ineffable blessedness. O that I were permitted to pursue this subject and describe some degrees of the endless progression of subsequent states!

But I now write only for beginners; and shall, therefore, proceed no further, but wait our LORD'S time for publishing what may be applicable to every conceivable degree of "stature in CHRIST JESUS." We must, however, urge it as a matter of the highest urgency, to cease from self-action and self-exertion, that God Himself may act alone: He says, by His Prophet David, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). But the creature is so infatuated with its own workings that it imagines nothing at all is done if it does not perceive and distinguish all its operations. It doesn't realise that its inability to observe its motion is caused by its speed; and that the operations of God, in extending and diffusing their influence, absorb those of the creature. The stars may be seen distinctly before the sun rises; but as his light advances, their rays are gradually absorbed by his and they become invisible, not from the want of light in themselves, but from the superior brightness of the sun.

The case is similar here; for there is a strong and universal light which absorbs all the little distinct lights of the soul; they grow faint and disappear under its powerful influence, and self-activity is now no longer distinguishable: yet it is a mistake to accuse this prayer of idleness, a charge that can arise only from inexperience. If they would but make some efforts towards the attainment of this prayer, they would soon experience the contrary of what they suppose and find their accusation groundless.

This appearance of inaction is, indeed, not the consequence of sterility and want, but of fruitfulness and abundance which will be clearly

perceived by the experienced soul, who will know and feel that the silence is full and anointed, and the result of the opposite of apathy and barrenness. There are two kinds of people that keep silence; the one because they have nothing to say, the other because they have too much: it is so with the soul in this state; the silence is occasioned by the superabundance of matter, too great for utterance.

To be drowned, and to die of thirst, are deaths widely different; yet water may, in some sense, be said to cause both; abundance destroys in one case, and want in the other. So in this state the abundance and overflowing of grace still the activity of self; and, therefore, it is of the utmost importance to remain as silent as possible.

The infant hanging at the mother's breast is a lively illustration of our subject: it begins to draw the milk by moving its little lips; but when the milk flows abundantly, it is content to swallow, and suspends its suction: by doing otherwise it would only hurt itself, spill the milk, and be obliged to quit the breast. We must act in like manner in the beginning of Prayer, by exerting the lips of the affections; but as soon as the milk of Divine Grace flows freely, we have nothing to do but, in repose and stillness, sweetly to drink it; and when it ceases to flow, we must again stir up the affections as the infant moves its lips. Whoever acts otherwise cannot turn this grace to advantage, which is given to draw the soul into the rest of Love, not the multiplicity of Self.

But what becomes of this child, who gently and without motion drinks in the milk? Who would believe that it can thus receive nourishment? Yet the more peacefully it feeds, the better it thrives. What, I say, becomes of this infant? It drops gently asleep on its mother's bosom. So the soul that is tranquil and peaceful in prayer, sinks often into a mystic slumber, where all its powers are at rest; till at length it is wholly fitted for that state, of which it enjoys these brief tastes. In this process the soul is led naturally, without effort, art, or study.

The Interior is not a stronghold to be taken by storm and violence, but a kingdom of peace, which is to be gained only by love.

If any will thus pursue the little path I have pointed out, it will lead them to intuitive prayer. God demands nothing extraordinary nor difficult; on the contrary, He is best pleased by simple and child-like conduct.

That which is most sublime and elevated in religion is the easiest attained: the most necessary Sacraments are the least difficult. It is thus also in natural things: if you would go to sea, embark on a river, and you will be conveyed to it insensibly and without exertion. Would you go to God, follow this sweet and simple path, and you will arrive at the desired object, with an ease and speed that will amaze you.

O that you would try it once! how soon would you find that all I have put forward falls short of the reality, and that your own experience will carry you infinitely beyond it! Is it fear that stops you casting yourself into those arms of LOVE, which were widely extended on the Cross only to receive you? Whence can your fears arise? What risk do you run, in depending solely on your God, and abandoning yourself wholly to Him? Ah! He will not deceive you, unless by giving an abundance beyond your highest hopes: but those who expect all from themselves will inevitably be deceived, and must suffer this rebuke of God by His prophet Isaiah, "you have wearied yourselves in the multiplicity of your ways, and have not said 'let us rest in peace'" (Isa. 62:10).

CHAPTER XIII; Of Rest before God

The soul advanced thus far has no need of any other preparation than its quietness: for now the Presence of God, which is the great effect, or rather continuation of Prayer, begins to be infused, and almost continuously. The soul enjoys transcendent blessedness, and feels that “it no longer lives, but that CHRIST lives in it”; and that the only way to find Him is introversion. No sooner do the bodily eyes close than the soul is wrapped up in Prayer: it is amazed at so great a blessing, and enjoys an internal converse, which external matters cannot interrupt. The same may be said of this species of prayer that is said of wisdom, “all good things come together with her” (Wisdom 7:11). For the virtues flow from this soul into exertion with so much sweetness and facility that they appear natural and spontaneous; and the living spring within breaks forth so freely and abundantly into all goodness that it becomes even insensible to evil. Let it then remain faithful in this state; and beware of choosing or seeking any other disposition whatsoever than this simple rest as a preparative either to Confession or Communion, to action or prayer, for its sole business is to expand itself for the full reception of the Divine infusions. I would not be understood to speak of the preparations necessary for the Sacraments, but of the most perfect dispositions in which they can be received.

CHAPTER XIV; Of Inward Silence

"The Lord is in His Holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20). Inward silence is absolutely indispensable, because the WORD is essential and eternal, and necessarily requires dispositions in the soul in some degree correspondent to His nature, as a capacity for the reception of Himself. Hearing is a sense formed to receive sounds, and is rather passive than active, admitting, but not communicating sensation; and if we would hear, we must lend the ear for that purpose: so CHRIST, the eternal WORD, without whose Divine in speaking the soul is dead, dark, and barren, when He would speak within us, requires the most silent attention to His all-quickening and efficacious voice. Hence we are so often urged in Sacred Writ to hear and be attentive to the Voice of God: I shall quote a few of these instances: "Hearken to me, my people, and give ear to me, O my nation!" (Isa. 51:4), and again, "Hear me, all you whom I carry in my bosom, and bear within my heart" (Isa. 46:3), and further by the Psalmist "Hear, O daughter and consider, and listen; forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty" (Ps 45:10, 11).

We should forget ourselves, and all self-interest, and listen and be attentive to the voice of our God: and these two simple actions, or rather dispositions, attract His love to that beauty which He Himself communicates. Outward silence is very needful for the cultivation and improvement of inward; and indeed it is impossible we should become truly internal without the love and practice of outward silence and retirement. God says, by the mouth of His prophet, "I will lead her into solitude, and there will I speak to her heart" (Hos. 2:14.); and unquestionably being internally occupied and engaged with God is incompatible with being busied with the trifles that surround us (Luke 38:42).

When through foolishness or unfaithfulness we become dispersed, or uncentred, it is of immediate importance to turn again gently and sweetly inward; and thus we may learn to keep the spirit and anointing of prayer through the day; for if prayer and recollection were confined to any appointed half-hour or hour, we should reap little fruit.

CHAPTER XV; Of Confession and Self-examination

Self-examination should always precede Confession, and in the nature and manner of it should relate to the state of the soul: the business of those that are advanced to the degree of which we now treat, is to lay their whole souls open before God, who will not fail to enlighten them, and enable them to see the peculiar nature of their faults. This examination, however, should be peaceful and tranquil, and we should depend on God for the discovery and knowledge of our sins, rather than on the diligence of our own scrutiny.

When we examine with constraint, and in the strength of our own efforts, we are easily deceived and betrayed by self-love into error; “we believe the evil good, and the good evil” (Isa. 5:20); but when we lie fully exposed before the Sun of Righteousness, His Divine beams make the smallest atoms visible. It follows that we must forsake self, and abandon our souls to God in examination as well as in Confession. When souls have attained to this species of prayer no fault escapes notice; on every commission they are instantly rebuked by an inward burning and tender confusion. Such is the scrutiny of Him who suffers no evil to be concealed; and under His purifying influence the only way is to turn affectionately to our Judge, and bear with meekness the pain and correction He inflicts. He becomes the incessant Examiner of the soul; it can now, indeed, no longer examine itself, and if it be faithful in its resignation, experience will convince the soul that it is a thousand times more effectually examined by His Divine Light than by the most active and vigorous self-inspection.

Those who tread these paths should be informed of a matter respecting their Confession where they are liable to go wrong. When they begin to give an account of their sins, instead of the regret and contrition they had been accustomed to feel, they find that love and tranquillity sweetly pervade and take possession of their souls: now those who are not properly instructed tend to withdraw from this sensation, to form an act of contrition, because they have heard, and with truth, that it is necessary: but they are not aware that they lose thereby the genuine contrition, which is this Intuitive Love, infinitely surpassing any effect produced by self-exertion, and comprehending the other acts in itself as in one principal act, in much higher

perfection than if they were distinctly perceived, and varied in their sensation Be not then troubled about other things when God acts so excellently in you and for you.

To hate sin in this manner is to hate it as God does. The purest love is that which is of His immediate operation in the soul: why should it then be so eager for action? Let it remain in the state He assigns it, agreeable to the instructions of Solomon: "Put your confidence in God; remain in quiet, where he has placed you" (Eccles. 11:22).

The soul will also be amazed at finding a difficulty in calling faults to remembrance: this, however, should cause no uneasiness; first, because this forgetfulness of our faults is some proof of our purification from them; and in this degree of advancement it is best. Secondly, because when Confession is our duty God will not fail to make known to us our greatest faults, for then He Himself examines, and the soul will feel the end of examination more perfectly accomplished than it could possibly have been by the utmost exertion of its own efforts.

These instructions, however, would be altogether unsuitable to the preceding degrees while the soul continues in its active state, wherein advancement follows application. It is those that have arrived at this more advanced state whom I would exhort to follow these instructions, and not to vary their one simple occupation even on approaching the Communion; they should remain in silence, and suffer God to act freely and without limitation. Who can better receive the Body and Blood of CHRIST than he in whom the HOLY SPIRIT is indwelling?

CHAPTER XVI; Of Reading and Vocal Prayer

If, while reading, you feel yourself recollected, lay aside the book and remain in stillness; at all times read but little, and cease to read when you are thus internally attracted.

The soul that is called to a state of inward silence should not occupy itself with long vocal prayers; whenever it does pray vocally, and finds a difficulty in it, and an attraction to silence, it should not persevere, but yield to the internal drawings, unless repeating such prayers be a matter of obedience. In any other case, it is much better not to be burdened with and tied down to the repetition of set forms, but wholly given up to the leading of the HOLY SPIRIT; and herein, indeed, is every sort of devotion wonderfully fulfilled.

CHAPTER XVII; Of Petitions

The soul should not be surprised at feeling itself unable to offer up to God such petitions as it had formerly made with freedom and ease; for now the Spirit makes intercession for it according to the will of God, that "Spirit which helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). We must co-operate with, and support the designs of God, which tend to remove all our own operations, that in their place His own may be substituted. Let this then be done in you, and don't let yourself be attached to anything, however good it may appear; for it is no longer good if it in any way turns you aside from what God wants of you: the Divine Will is preferable to all things else. Shake off then all attachments to the interests of self, and live on faith and resignation; here it is that genuine faith begins truly to operate.

CHAPTER XVIII; Of Defects or Infirmities

If we either wander among externals, or sink into self-indulgence, or commit a fault, we must instantly turn inwards; for having departed from our God, we should as soon as possible return again to Him, and experience in His presence whatever sensations He is pleased to give. On committing a fault it is very important to guard against vexation and upset, which spring from a secret root of pride and a love of our own excellence; we are hurt by feeling what we are; and if we discourage ourselves or despond, we become weaker; and from our reflections on the fault a remorse arises, which is often worse than the fault itself.

The truly humble soul is not surprised at defects or failings; and the more miserable and wretched it sees itself, the more it abandons itself to God, and press for a nearer and more intimate alliance with Him, that it may draw on His eternal strength. We should rather be inclined to act thus, as God Himself has said, "I will make You understand what You ought to do; I will teach You the way by which You should go; and I will have my eye continually on You for a guide" (Ps. 32:8).

CHAPTER XIX; Of Distractions and Temptations

A direct contest and struggle with distractions and temptations rather serves to strengthen them, and withdraws the soul from that adherence to God, which should ever be its principal occupation. The surest and safest method for conquest is simply to turn away from the evil and draw yet nearer and closer to our God. A little child, on seeing a monster, does not wait to fight with it, and will hardly look at it, but quickly turns to the safety of its mother, in total confidence of safety; so likewise should the soul turn from the dangers of temptation to God. "God is in the midst of her," says the Psalmist, "she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early" (Ps. 46:5).

If we do otherwise, and in our weakness attempt to attack our enemies, we shall often feel ourselves wounded, if not totally defeated; but, by casting ourselves into the simple Presence of God, we shall find instant supplies of strength for our support. This was the help David looked for: "I have set," says he, "the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices: my flesh also shall rest in hope" (Ps. 45:8, 9). And it is said in Exodus, "The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

CHAPTER XX; Of Self-Annihilation

Supplication and sacrifice are included in prayer, which, according to St. John, is “an incense whose smoke ascends to God;” so it is said in the Apocalypse that “the Angel was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints” (Rev 8:3).

Prayer is pouring out the heart in the Presence of God: “I have poured out my soul before God” says the mother of Samuel. (1 Sam. 1:15) The prayer of the wise men at the feet of CHRIST in the stable of Bethlehem was signified by the incense they offered: for prayer being the energy and fire of love, melting, dissolving, and sublimating the soul, and causing it to ascend to God; so, in proportion as the soul is melted and dissolved, fragrance flows from it; and this fragrance comes from the intense fire of love within.

This is illustrated in Canticles (1:11) where the spouse says, “While the King sits on his couch, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance” The couch is the ground or centre of the soul; and when God is there, and we know how to dwell with Him, and abide in His Presence, the sacred power and influence of it gradually dissolves the hardness of the soul, and, as it melts, fragrance issues forth: hence it is, that the Beloved says of His spouse, in seeing her soul melt when He spoke, “Who is this coming out of the wilderness, like pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?” (Cant. 5:6 and 3:6).

Thus the soul ascends to God, by giving up self to the destroying and annihilating power of Divine Love: this, indeed, is a most essential and necessary sacrifice in the Christian life, and that alone by which we pay true homage to the sovereignty of God; as it is written, “The power of the LORD is great, and he is honoured only by the humble” (Eccles. 3:20). By the destruction of the existence of self within us, we truly acknowledge the supreme existence of our God; for unless we cease to exist in self, the Spirit of the ETERNAL WORD cannot exist in us: now it is by the giving up of our own life, that we give place for His coming; and “in dying to ourselves, He lives and abides in us.”

We should, indeed, surrender our whole being to CHRIST JESUS: and cease to live any longer in ourselves, that He may become our life; “that being dead, our life may be hid with CHRIST IN God” (Col. 3:3). “Pass you into me,” says God, “all you who earnestly seek after me”

(Eccles. 24:16).

But how is it we pass into God? We leave and forsake ourselves, that we may be lost in Him; and this can be effected only by annihilation ; which being the true prayer of adoration, renders to God alone, all “Blessing, honour, glory and power, for ever and ever” (Rev. 5:13). This is the prayer of truth; “It is worshipping God in spirit and in truth” (John 6:23). “In spirit,” because we enter into the purity of that Spirit which prays within us, and are drawn forth and freed from our own carnal and corrupt manner of praying; “In truth” because we are thereby placed in the great Truth of the ALL OF God, and the NOTHING of the creature.

There are but these two truths, the ALL, and the NOTHING; everything else is falsehood. We can pay due honour to the ALL OF God, only in our own annihilation, which is no sooner accomplished, than He, who never suffers a void in nature, instantly fills us with Himself.

If we only knew the virtue and the blessings which the soul derives from this prayer, we should willingly be employed in it without ceasing. “It is the pearl of great price: it is the hidden treasure” (Matt. 13:44, 45), which, whoever finds, sells freely all that he has to purchase it: “It is the well of living water, which springs up to everlasting life”: It is the adoration of God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:14-23), and it is the full performance of the purest gospel precepts. Jesus Christ assures us, that the “Kingdom of God is within us” (Luke 17:21), and this is true in two senses : First, when God becomes so fully Master and Lord in us, that nothing resists His dominion; then our interior is His kingdom : And again, when we possess God, who is the Supreme Good, we possess His kingdom also, wherein there is fullness of joy, and where we attain the end of our creation: thus it is said, “to serve God, is to reign.” The reason we were created, indeed, is to enjoy our God, even in this life; but alas! how few there are who think of this seriously.

CHAPTER XXI; The Noble Results of this Species of Prayer

Some people, when they hear of the prayer of silence, falsely imagine, that the soul remains stupid, dead, and inactive. But, unquestionably, it acts in it, more nobly and more extensively than it had ever done before; for God Himself is the mover, and the soul now acts by the agency of His Spirit.

When Paul speaks of our being led by the SPIRIT OF God, it is not meant that we should cease from action; but that we should act through the internal agency of His Grace. This is finely represented by the Ezekiel's vision of the "wheels, which had a Living Spirit; and wherever the Spirit was to go, they went; they ascended, and descended, as they were moved; for the Spirit of Life was in them, and they returned not when they went" (Ezek. 1:18). Thus the soul should be equally obedient to the will of the Enlivening Spirit that directs it, and scrupulously faithful to follow only as that moves. These motions now never tend to return, in reflection on the creatures or itself; but go forward, in an incessant approach towards the chief end.

This action of the soul is attended with the utmost tranquillity, When it acts of itself, the act is forced and constrained; and, therefore, it can the more easily perceive and distinguish it: but when it acts under the influence of the Spirit of Grace, its action is so free, so easy, and so natural, that it almost seems as if it did not act at all: "He has set me at large, he has delivered me, because he delighted in me" (Ps. 18:19).

When the soul is in its central tendency, or, in other words, is returned through recollection into itself; from that moment the central attraction becomes a most potent action, infinitely surpassing in its energy every other species. Nothing indeed, can equal the swiftness of this tendency to the centre: and though an action, yet it is so noble, so peaceful, so full of tranquillity, so natural and spontaneous, that it appears to the soul as if it did not act at all.

When a wheel rolls slowly we can easily distinguish its parts; but when its motion is rapid we can distinguish nothing. So the soul which rests in God has an activity exceedingly noble and elevated, yet altogether peaceful: and the more peaceful it is, the swifter is its course; because it is proportionately given up to that Spirit, by which it is moved and directed.

This attracting spirit is no other than God Himself, Who, in drawing us, causes us to run to Him. How well did the spouse understand this when she said, "Draw me, and we will run after You" (Cant. 1:3). Draw me to You, O my Divine centre, by the secret springs of my existence, and all my powers and senses shall follow the potent magnetism! This simple attraction is both an ointment to heal, and a perfume to allure: "we follow," says she, "the fragrance of your perfumes"; and though so powerfully magnetic it is followed by the soul freely, and without constraint; for it is equally delightful as forcible; and whilst it attracts by its potency, it charms with its sweetness.

"Draw me," says the spouse, "and we will run after You." She speaks of and to herself: "draw me," - see the unity of the centre, which attracts! "We will run," - see the correspondence and course of all the senses and powers in following that attraction!

Instead then of promoting idleness, we promote the highest activity by teaching a total dependence on the Spirit of God as our moving principle; for it is "in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). This meek dependence on the Spirit of God is indispensably necessary to reinstate the soul in its primeval unity and simplicity, that it may thereby attain what it was created for. We must, therefore, forsake our various activities, to re-enter the simplicity and unity of God, in Whose image we were originally formed. "The Spirit is one and manifold" (Wisdom 7:22), and His unity does not preclude His multiplicity. We enter into His unity when we are united to His Spirit, and have one and the same Spirit with Him; and we are multiplied in respect to the outward execution of His will, without any departure from our state of union: so that when we are wholly moved by the DIVINE Spirit, which is infinitely active, our activity must, indeed, differ widely in its energy and degree from that which is merely our own.

We must yield ourselves to the guidance of "Wisdom, which is more moving than any motion" (Wisdom 7:24); and by abiding in dependence on its action, our activity will be truly efficient.

"All things were made by the WORD, and without him was not anything made, that was made" (John 1:3). God originally formed us in His own likeness; and He now forms us with the Spirit of His WORD,

that “Breath of Life” (Gen. 2:7), which was breathed into us at our creation, and which alone brought about the image of God; and this life is a Life of Unity, simple, pure, intimate, and always fruitful. The Devil having broken and deformed the Divine Image in the soul, the agency of the same WORD, whose Spirit was breathed into us at our creation, is absolutely necessary for its renovation; and it can only be renewed by our being subject to Him who is to renew it: but who can restore the Image of God within us in its primeval form, save He who is the Essential Image of the Father. Our activity should, therefore, consist in endeavouring to acquire and maintain such a state as may be most susceptible of Divine impressions, most flexible to all the operations of the ETERNAL WORD. Whilst a tablet is unsteady, the painter is unable to draw a true copy: so every act of our own selfish and proper spirit is productive of false and inaccurate lines; it interrupts the work, and defeats the design of this adorable Painter; we must then remain in peace and move only when He moves us. “Jesus Christ has the Life, in himself” (John 5:26), and He should be the life of every living thing.

As all action has worth only in proportion to the dignity of its purpose, this action is incontestably more noble than any other. Actions produced by a Divine principle, are Divine; but creaturely actions, however good they appear, are only human, or at best virtuous, even when accompanied by Grace. Jesus Christ says, He has the Life in Himself. All other beings have only a borrowed life; but the WORD has the Life in Himself, and being communicative of His nature He desires to communicate it to man. We should, therefore, make room for the influx of this Life, which can only be done by the election of the Adam life, the suppression of the activity of self.

This agrees with the assertion of Paul: “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new!” (2 Cor. 5:17), but this state can be accomplished only by dying to ourselves and to all our own activity, that the activity of God may be substituted in its place.

Instead, therefore, of forbidding activity, we advise it; but in absolute dependence on the Spirit of God, that His activity may take place of our own. This can only be effected by the agreement of the creature;

and this agreement can only be yielded by moderating and restraining our own activity, that the activity of God may gradually gain the ascendancy, and finally absorb all that is ours as distinguishable from it.

Jesus Christ has exemplified this in the Gospel: Martha did what was right; but because she did it in her own spirit Christ rebuked her. The spirit of man is restless and turbulent; for which reason it does little, though it would appear to do much. "Martha," says Christ, "you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful; and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41, 42). And what was it that Mary had chosen? Rest, tranquillity, and peace. She apparently ceased to act, that the Spirit of Christ might act in her; she ceased to live, that Christ might be her life.

This shows us how necessary it is to renounce ourselves and all our own activity, to follow Jesus Christ; and we cannot follow Him without being animated with His Spirit. Now that His Spirit may gain admission in us it is necessary that our own proper spirit should be first expelled: "He that is joined to the Lord," says St. Paul, "is one spirit with him" (1 Cor. 6:17); and David said, "It was good for him to draw near to the Lord, and to put his trust in him" (Ps. 73:28).

This drawing near to God, is the beginning of Union. Divine Union has its commencement, its progression, and its consummation. It is first an inclination and tendency towards God: when the soul is introverted in the manner before described, it gets within the influence of the central attraction, and acquires an eager desire after Union: on a nearer approach to God, it adheres to Him; and growing stronger and stronger in its adhesion, it finally becomes one; that is, "One Spirit with Him:" and it is thus that the spirit which had wandered and strayed from God, returns again to its proper source.

Into this process, which is the Divine motion, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we must necessarily enter. Paul says, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9): therefore, to be Christ's, we must be filled with His Spirit, and to be filled with His Spirit we must be emptied of our own. The Apostle, in the same passage, proves the necessity of this Divine influence or motion: "As many" says he, "as

are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). The Spirit of Divine Sonship is then the Spirit of Divine action or motion: he, therefore, adds, “you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.”

This Spirit is no other than the Spirit of Christ, through which we share in His Sonship; “And this Spirit bears witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16).

When the soul yields itself to the influence and motions of this Blessed Spirit, it feels the testimony of its Divine Sonship; and it feels also, with superadded joy, that it has received not the Spirit of bondage, but of Liberty, the liberty of the children of God. It then finds that it acts freely and sweetly, though with vigour and infallibility.

The Spirit of Divine action is so necessary in all things, that St. Paul, in the same passage, founds that necessity on our ignorance with respect to what we pray for: “The Spirit,” says he, “also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.” This is positive; if we know not what we stand in need of, nor pray, as we ought to do, for those things which are necessary; and if the Spirit which is in us, and to which we resign ourselves, asks and intercedes for us; should we not give unlimited freedom to its action, to its unspeakable groanings in our behalf?

This Spirit is the Spirit of the WORD which is always heard, as He says Himself: “I know that You hear me always” (John 11:42); and if we freely allow this Spirit to pray and intercede in us, we also shall be always heard. The reason of this is given us by the same Apostle, that skilful Mystic, and Master of the Internal life, where he adds, “He that searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit; because he makes intercession for the saints, according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:27). That is to say, the Spirit demands only what is conformable to the will of God; and the will of God is, that we should be saved: that we should become perfect: He, therefore, intercedes for what is necessary for so great an end.

Why should we then burden ourselves with superfluous cares, and fatigue and weary ourselves in the multiplicity of our ways, without

ever saying, "Let us rest in peace?" God Himself invites us to cast our cares, our anxieties, upon Him; and He complains in Isaiah, with ineffable goodness, that the soul had expended its powers and its treasures on a thousand external objects, and mistook its path to happiness, which was attainable much more easily: "Why" says God, "do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in goodness" (Isa. 45:2).

If we only knew the blessedness of listening to God like this, and how greatly the soul is strengthened and invigorated by it, "Everyone would surely be silent before the Lord" (Zech. 2:13) ; all would cease and be still, as soon as He appears. But to draw us further into boundless resignation, God assures us, by the same Prophet, that we should fear nothing in this abandonment, because He takes a care of us, surpassing the highest tenderness of which we can form an idea: "Can a woman" says He, "forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, she may forget; yet will I not forget you" (Isa. 49:15). O blessed assurance, pregnant with consolation! Who, after this, shall fear to resign themselves wholly to the dispensations and guidance of their God?

CHAPTER XXII; Of Internal Actions

Actions are distinguished into External and Internal.

External actions are those which bear relation to some object, and are either morally good or evil, merely according to the nature of the principle from which they proceed. I intend here to speak only of Internal actions, those energies of the soul, by which it turns internally to some objects, and avoids others.

If during my application to God I should form a will to change the nature of my action, I thereby withdraw myself from God, and turn to created objects, and that in a greater or less degree according to the strength of the action: and if, when I am turned towards the creature, I would return to God, I must necessarily form an action for that purpose; and the more perfect this action is, the more complete is the conversion.

Till conversion is perfected many repeated actions are necessary; for it is generally progressive, though with some it is almost instantaneous. My action, however, should consist in a continual turning to God, an exertion of every faculty and power of the soul purely for Him, in accordance the instructions of the Son of Sirach: "Re-unite all the motions of your heart in the holiness of God" and to the example of David, "I will keep my whole strength for You" (Ps. 58: 10), which is done by earnestly re-entering into one's self. As Isaiah says, "Return to your heart" (Isa. 46:8); for we have strayed from our heart by sin, and it is our heart only that God requires, "My son give me your heart, and let your eye observe my ways" (Prov. 23:26). To give the heart to God is to have the whole eternal energy of the soul ever centring in Him, that we may be rendered conformable to His will. We must, therefore, continue invariably turned to God from our very first application to Him.

But the soul being weak and unstable, and accustomed to turn to external objects, is consequently prone to dissipation. This evil, however, will be counteracted if the soul, on perceiving the wandering, by a pure act of return to God, instantly replaces itself again in Him ; and this act subsists as long as the conversion by the powerful influence of a simple and sincere return to God lasts: and as many repeated acts form a habit, the soul gains the habit of conversion, and

that act which was before interrupted and distinct becomes continual. The soul should not then be perplexed about forming an act which already exists, and which, indeed, it cannot attempt to form without difficulty and constraint; it even finds that it is withdrawn from its proper state under pretence of seeking that which is in reality acquired, seeing the habit is already formed and is confirmed in habitual conversion and habitual love. It is seeking one act by the help of many, instead of continuing attached to God by one simple act alone.

We may remark that at times we easily form many distinct yet simple actions, which shows that we have wandered, and that we re-enter our heart after having strayed from it; yet when we have re-entered we should remain there in peace. We err, therefore, in supposing that we do not form actions; we form them continually, but they should be in their nature conformable to the degree of our spiritual advancement.

The greatest difficulty with most spiritual people arises from their not clearly comprehending this matter. Now some actions are transient and distinct, others are continual; and again, some are direct, and others reflex. All cannot form the first, neither are all in a state suited to form the last.

The first actions are for those who have strayed, and who need specific direction, proportioned to the degree of their straying, which, if small, needs something very simple.

By the continued action I mean that whereby the soul is altogether turned toward God in a direct tendency, which always remains, and which it does not need to renew unless it has been interrupted. The soul being thus turned is in love, and abides in it, "and he that dwells in love dwells in God" (1 John 4:16). The soul then, as it were, exists and rests in this habitual act, but free from sloth or torpor; for still there is an uninterrupted act remaining, which is a sweet sinking into the Deity, whose attraction becomes more and more powerful; and in following this potent attraction, the soul presses further, and sinks continually deeper, into the ocean of Divine Love, maintaining an activity infinitely more powerful, vigorous, and effectual than that which served to accomplish its first return.

Now the soul that is thus profoundly and vigorously active, being wholly given up to God, does not perceive its activity, because it is direct and not reflex; and this is the cause why some, who do not express themselves properly, say that they do not act at all; but it is a mistake, for they were never more truly or nobly active: they should rather say that they did not distinguish their acts than that they did not act. I allow they do not act of themselves, but they are drawn, and they follow the attraction. Love is the weight which sinks them into God, as into an infinite sea, wherein they descend with inconceivable rapidity from one profound depth to another.

It is then absurd to say that we do not form actions: all form actions, but the manner of their formation is not alike in all. The cause of the mistake is this, all who know they should act are desirous of acting clearly and perceptibly. But this cannot be; distinct and aware actions are for beginners, and actions of a higher nature for those in a more advanced state. To stop in the former, which are weak and of little profit, is to debar one's self of the latter; and again, to attempt the latter without having passed through the former is a no less considerable error.

All things should then be done in their season. Every state has its beginning, its progress, and its completion; and it is an unhappy error to stop in the beginning. There is even no art but what has its progress: and at first we must labour with diligence and toil, but at last we shall reap the harvest of our industry. When the vessel is in port the mariners are obliged to exert all their strength to put to sea; but at length they turn her easily as they please. In like manner, while the soul remains in sin and creaturely entanglements, very frequent and strenuous efforts are needed to gain its freedom; the cords which hold it must be loosed; and then by strong and vigorous efforts it gathers itself inwards, pushing off gradually from the old port; and in leaving that at a distance it proceeds to the interior, the haven to which it wishes to steer.

When the vessel is thus turned, as she advances on the sea she leaves the land behind; and the further she departs from the old harbour, the less difficulty and labour is needed to move her forward: at length she begins to get sweetly under sail and now proceeds so swiftly in her

course that the oars which are now useless are laid aside. How is the pilot now employed?

He is content with spreading the sails and holding the rudder. To spread the sails is to lay one's self before God in the prayer of simple exposition, that we may be acted upon by His Spirit: to hold the rudder is to restrain our hearts from wandering from the true course, recalling it gently, and guiding it steadily according to the instructions of the Blessed Spirit, which gradually gain possession and dominion of the heart, just as the wind by degrees fills the sails and impels the vessel. While the winds are fair the pilot and mariners rest from their labours, and the vessel glides rapidly along without their toil; and when they thus repose and leave the vessel to the wind, they make more way in one hour than they had done in a length of time by all their former efforts: were they even now to attempt using the oar they would not only tire themselves, but slow the vessel by their ill-timed labours.

This is the manner of acting we should pursue interiorly; it will, indeed, advance us in a short time, by the Divine impulse, infinitely further than a whole life spent in reiterated acts of self-exertion; and whosoever will take this path will find it easier than any other.

If the wind is contrary and blows a storm, we must cast anchor to hold the vessel: our anchor is a firm confidence and hope in our God, waiting patiently the calming of the tempest and the return of a favourable gale as David waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined to him and heard his cry (Ps. 40:1). We must, therefore, be resigned to the Spirit of God, giving up ourselves wholly to His Divine Guidance.

CHAPTER XXIII; To Pastors and Teachers

If all who laboured for the conversion of others were to introduce them immediately into Prayer and the Interior Life, and make it their main design to gain and win over the heart, numberless as well as permanent conversions would certainly ensue. On the contrary, few and transient fruits must attend that labour which is confined to outward matters; such as burdening the disciple with a thousand precepts for external exercises, instead of leaving the soul to CHRIST by the occupation of the heart in Him.

If ministers were careful thus to instruct their flock; shepherds, while they watched their sheep, might have the Spirit of the primitive Christians, and the farmer at the plough maintain a blessed communion with his God; the workman, while he exhausts his outward man with labour, would be renewed in internal strength; and every sort of sin would soon disappear and every believer become a true follower of the Good Shepherd.

O when once the heart is gained, how easily is all moral evil corrected! it is, therefore, that God, above all things, requires the heart. It is the conquest of the heart alone that can remove those dreadful vices which are so predominant, such as drunkenness, blasphemy, uncleanness, envy, and theft. JESUS CHRIST would become the universal and peaceful Sovereign, and the face of the Church would be wholly renewed.

The decay of internal piety is unquestionably the source of the various errors that have arisen in the Church; all which would speedily be overthrown should inward religion be re-established. Errors are only damaging to the soul as they weaken faith and deter from prayer; and if, instead of engaging our wandering brethren in vain disputes, we could but teach them simply to believe and diligently to pray, we should lead them sweetly to God.

O how inexpressibly great is the loss sustained by mankind from the neglect of the Interior Life! And how tremendous must the great day of retribution be to those who are entrusted with the care of souls, for not having discovered and dispensed to their flock this hidden treasure.

Some excuse themselves by saying that this is a dangerous way;

pleading the incapacity of simple people to comprehend spiritual matters. But the Oracles of Truth say the opposite: “The Lord loves those who walk simply” (Prov. 12:22). And where can be the danger of walking in the only true way, which is JESUS CHRIST? of giving up ourselves to Him, fixing our eye continually on Him, placing all our confidence in His grace, and tending with all the strength of our soul to His pure Love?

The simple ones, so far from being incapable of this perfection, are, by their teachableness, innocence, and humility, particularly able to find it; and as they are not used to analysing, they are more able to receive it simply, less likely to have opinions about it. Even from their lack of learning, they yield more freely to the teachings of the Divine Spirit: whereas others, who are blinded by self-sufficiency and enslaved by prejudice, give great resistance to the operations of Grace. We are told in Scripture “that to the simple; God gives the understanding of his law” (Ps. 118:130); and we are also assured that God loves to commune freely with them: “The Lord cares for the simple; I was reduced to poverty, and he saved me” (Ps. 114:6). To warn Spiritual Fathers against preventing the little ones from coming to CHRIST, He Himself said to His Apostles, “Let little children come to me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 19:14). The Apostles had tried to prevent children from going to our Lord, which caused this gracious charge. Man often applies a remedy to the outward body, whilst the disease lies at the heart. The cause of our being so unsuccessful in reforming mankind is our beginning with external matters; all our labours in this field only produce fruit that doesn't last: but if the key of the interior be first given, the exterior would be naturally and easily reformed. To teach man to seek God in his heart, to think of Him, to return to Him whenever he finds that he has wandered from Him, and to do and to suffer all things with a single eye to please Him, is the natural and ready process; it is leading the soul to the very source of Grace, where all that is necessary for sanctification is found.

I, therefore, urge you all, O you who have the care of souls, to put them at once into this way, which is JESUS CHRIST; it is He Himself who urges you, by the Precious Blood He has shed for those entrusted to you, “to speak to the heart of Jerusalem” (Isa. 40:2). O you Dispensers

of His Grace, you Preachers of His Word, you Ministers of His Sacraments, establish His Kingdom! And that it may indeed be established, make Him Ruler over the hearts of His subjects! For as it is the heart alone that can oppose His Sovereignty, it is by the subjection of the heart that His Sovereignty is most highly exalted: "Give glory to the holiness of God, and he shall become your sanctification" (Isa. 8:13). Compose catechisms particularly to teach prayer, not by analysis or method, for the simple can't do those; but to teach the prayer of the heart, not of the understanding; the prayer of GOD'S Spirit, not of man's invention. Alas! by wanting them to pray in elaborate forms, and to analyse, you create their chief obstacles. The children have been led astray from the best of Fathers, by you trying to teach them too refined, too polished a language. Go then, you poor children, to your Heavenly Father; speak to Him in your natural language; and although it may be rough in the opinion of men, it is not so to Him. A Father is much better pleased with a stumbling prayer full of love and respect because He knows it proceeds from the heart, than by a formal and barren monologue. The simple and undisguised emotions of a child's love are infinitely more expressive than all language and all reasoning. By forming instructions how to love by rule and method the ESSENTIAL LOVE, men have in a great measure estranged themselves from Him. O how unnecessary is it to teach an art of loving! The language of Love, though natural to the lover, is nonsense and barbarism to him who doesn't love. The best way to learn the love of God is to love HIM. The ignorant and simple, because they proceed with more heart and simplicity, often become most perfect in it. The Spirit of God needs none of our systems and methods; when it pleases Him, He turns shepherds into prophets: and, so far from excluding any from the Temple of Prayer, He throws wide the gates, that all may enter; while Wisdom cries aloud in the highways, "Whoso is simple let him turn in here" (Prov. 9:4); and to the Fools she says, "Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Prov. 9:5). And does not JESUS CHRIST Himself thank His Father for having hid the secrets of his kingdom from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes? (Matt. 11:25).

CHAPTER XXIV; Of the way to attain Divine Union

It is impossible to attain Divine Union solely by the activity of meditation, or by the melting of the affections, or even by the highest degree of luminous and distinctly-comprehended prayer.

There are many reasons for this, the chief of which are as follows: - First, According to Scripture “no man shall see God and live” (Ex. 33:20). Now all the exercises of prayer, and even of active contemplation, while esteemed as the summit and end of the life of obedience, and not merely as a preparative to it, are still living exercises by which we cannot see God; that is to say, be united with Him; for all that is of man's own power or exertion must first die, be it ever so noble, ever so exalted.

John relates “There was a great silence in heaven” (Rev. v8:1). Now heaven represents the foundation and centre of the soul, wherein, before the Majesty of God appears, all must be hushed to silence. All the efforts, the very existence of self-sufficiency, must be destroyed, because nothing is opposite to God but self-sufficiency; and all the sin of man lies in this failing, as in the power of its evil nature, so that the purity of a soul increases as it loses this quality; till at length that which had been a fault, while the soul lived in self-sufficiency and so acted, becomes no longer such, from the purity and innocence it has acquired by departing from what caused the difference between it and God.

Secondly, To unite two things so opposite, as the impurity of the creature and the purity of God, the simplicity of God and the multiplicity of man, much more is needed than the impotent efforts of the creature: no less than a singular and effective operation of the Almighty can ever do this, for things must be brought to some similarity before they can blend and become one. Can the impurity of dross be united with the purity of gold? What then does God do? He sends His own Wisdom before Him, as the last fire shall be sent upon earth to destroy by its activity all that is impure in it; and as nothing can resist the power of that fire, in the same way this Wisdom dissolves and destroys all the impurities of the creature and disposes it for Divine Union.

This impurity, so opposite to Union, consists in self-sufficiency and

activity. This is the source and fountain of all that defilement and corruption which can never be allied to Essential Purity; the rays of the sun may glance, indeed, upon filth and mire, but can never be united with them. Activity obstructs Union ; for God being an Infinite Stillness, the soul, in order to be united to Him, must participate in this stillness, else the contrariety between stillness and activity would prevent assimilation.

Therefore, the soul can never arrive at Divine Union but by the repose or stillness of the will, nor can it ever become One with God but by being re-established in the purity of its first creation, that is, in this central rest.

God purifies the soul by His Wisdom, as refiners do metals in the furnace. Gold can only be purified by fire, which gradually separates from and consumes all that is earthy and heterogeneous: it must be melted and dissolved, and all impure mixtures taken away by casting it again and again into the furnace; thus it is refined from all internal corruption, and even exalted to a state incapable of further purification.

The goldsmith now no longer discovers any contaminated mixture; its purity is perfect, its simplicity complete. The fire no longer touches it; and were it to remain an age in the furnace its purity would not be increased nor its substance diminished. Then is it fit for the most exquisite workmanship: and if thereafter it seems obscured or defiled, it is no more than an accidental defilement contracted by its closeness to some impure body; but this is only superficial, and widely different from its former impurity, which was hidden in the very centre and ground of its nature and, as it were, identified with it. Those, however, who are ignorant of this process and its blessed effects would be apt to despise and reject the vessel of pure gold sullied by some external pollution, and prefer an impure and gross metal that appeared superficially bright and polished.

Further, the goldsmith never mingles together the pure and the impure gold, lest the dross of the one should corrupt the other; before they can be united they must first be equally refined; he therefore plunges the impure metal into the furnace till all its dross is purged away and it becomes fully prepared for incorporation and union with

the pure gold.

This is what Paul means when he declares that "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3:13). He adds, "If any man's work be burnt, he shall suffer loss; yet he himself shall be saved, yet as by fire". (v15) He here intimates that there is a species of works so degraded by impure mixtures that though the mercy of God accepts them, yet they must pass through the fire to be purged from the contamination of Self; and it is in this sense that God is said to "examine and judge our righteousness" (Ps. 14:3), because "by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified, but by the righteousness of God, which is by faith in JESUS CHRIST" (Rom. 3:20, etc.).

Thus we see that the Divine Justice and Wisdom, as an unremitting fire, must devour and destroy all that is earthly, sensual, and carnal, and all self-activity, before the soul can be fitted for and capable of Union with God. Now this purification can never be accomplished by the industry of fallen man; on the contrary, he submits to it always with reluctance: he is so obsessed with self, and so averse to its destruction, that if God did not act on him powerfully and with authority, he would for ever resist.

It may, perhaps, be objected here that as God never robs man of his free will he can always resist the Divine Operations, and that I therefore err in saying God acts thus absolutely and without the consent of man.

Let me, however, explain myself. By man's giving a willing consent, God, without hindrance, may assume full power and entire guidance; for having, in the beginning of his conversion, made an unreserved surrender of himself to all that God wills of him or by him, he thereby gave an active consent to whatever God thereafter might operate or require. But when God begins to burn, destroy, and purify, then the soul, not perceiving the salutary design of these operations, shrinks from them: and as the gold seems rather to blacken than brighten when first put into the furnace, so it thinks that its purity is lost and that its temptations are sins; so that if an active and explicit consent were then needed the soul could scarcely give it, and often would withhold it. The utmost the soul can do is to remain firm in a willing disposition, enduring as well as it is able all these Divine Operations,

which it neither can nor will obstruct.

In this manner, therefore, the soul is purified from all its multiple characteristics which constitute the great difference between it and God: it is rendered, by degrees, conformed, and then uniform; and the capacity of the creature is elevated, ennobled, and enlarged, though in a secret and hidden manner, and therefore called mystical: but in all these operations the soul must concur obediently. It is true, indeed, that at the beginning of its purification activity is requisite; which as the Divine Operations become stronger and stronger it must gradually cease, yielding itself up to the impulses of the Divine Spirit, till wholly absorbed in Him. But this is often a difficult and tedious process.

We do not then say, as some have falsely supposed, that there is no need of action in the process of Divine Purification; on the contrary, we affirm it is the gate; at which, however, we would not have those stop who are to obtain ultimate perfection, which is impossible, until the first helps are laid aside: for, however necessary they may have been at the entrance of the road, they become afterwards hindrances, and greatly detrimental to those who adhere to them, preventing them from ever arriving at the end of their course. This made Paul say, "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in CHRIST JESUS" (Phil. 3:13).

Would you not say a man had lost his senses, who, having started an important journey, should take up residence at the first inn because he had been told that many travellers who had come that way had lodged in the house and stayed there? All we would wish then is, that souls should press toward the mark, should pursue their journey, and take the shortest and easiest road; not stopping at the first stage, but following the counsel and example of Paul, let themselves be guided and governed by the Spirit of Grace which would safely guide them to the purpose of their creation, the enjoyment of God. But while we confess that the enjoyment of God is the only purpose for which we were created; that without holiness none can attain it: and that to attain it, we must necessarily pass through a severe and purifying process; how strange is it that we should dread and avoid this process, as if that could be the cause of evil or imperfection in the present life,

which is to be productive of glory and blessedness in the life to come! None can be ignorant that God is the Supreme Good; that essential blessedness consists in Union with Him; that the Saints are more or less glorified, according as this Union is more or less advanced; and that the soul cannot attain this Union by the mere activity of its own powers: for God communicates Himself to the soul in proportion as its capacity is great, noble, and extensive; it cannot be united to God but in simplicity and obedience; and as this Union is beatitude itself, the way to it in simplicity and obedience, instead of being evil, must be good, must be most free from delusion and danger, the safest, the surest, and the best.

Would JESUS CHRIST have made this the most perfect and necessary way had there been evil or danger in it? No! all can travel this road to blessedness; and all are called to it, as to the enjoyment of God, which alone is beatitude, both in this world and the next. I say the enjoyment of God Himself and not His gifts which, as they do not constitute essential beatitude, cannot fully content an immortal spirit: the soul is so noble, so great, that the most exalted gifts of God cannot fill its immense capacity with happiness unless the Giver also bestows Himself. Now the whole desire of the Divine Being is to give Himself to every creature, according to the capacity with which it is endued; and yet, alas! how reluctantly man suffers himself to be drawn to God! how fearful is he to prepare for Divine Union!

Some say that we should not attempt, by our own ability, to place ourselves in this state. I grant it: but what a poor excuse is this? since I have all along asserted and proved that the utmost exertion of the highest created being could never accomplish this of itself: it is God alone must do it. The creature may, indeed, open the window; but it is the sun himself that must give the light.

The same people say again that some may pretend to have attained this blessed state: but, alas! none can any more pretend this than the wretch, who is on the point of perishing with hunger can for a length of time pretend to be full and satisfied; some wish or word, some sigh or sign, will inevitably escape him, and betray his famished state. Since then none can attain this blessed state save those whom God Himself leads and places in it, we do not pretend to introduce any into

it, but only to point out the shortest and safest road that leads to it: begging you not to be slowed in your progress by any external exercises, not to sit down a resident at the first inn, nor to be satisfied with the sweets which are tasted in the milk for babes. If the Water of Eternal Life is shown to some thirsty souls, how inexpressibly cruel would it be, by confining them to a round of external forms, to prevent their approaching it, so that their longing shall never be satisfied but they shall perish with thirst!

Let us all agree in the way, as we all agree in the end, which is evident and indisputable.

The way has its beginning, progress, and end; and the nearer we approach the end, the further is the beginning behind us: it is only by proceeding from one that we can ever arrive at the other. Would you get from the entrance to the distant end of the road without passing over the intermediate space? And surely, if the end is good, holy, and necessary, and the entrance also good, can that be condemnable, as evil, which is the necessary passage, the direct road leading from the one to the other?

O you blind and foolish men, who pride yourselves on science, wisdom, wit, and power, how well do you verify what God has said, that "His Secrets are hidden from the great and wise, and revealed to The Little Ones - The Babes!"