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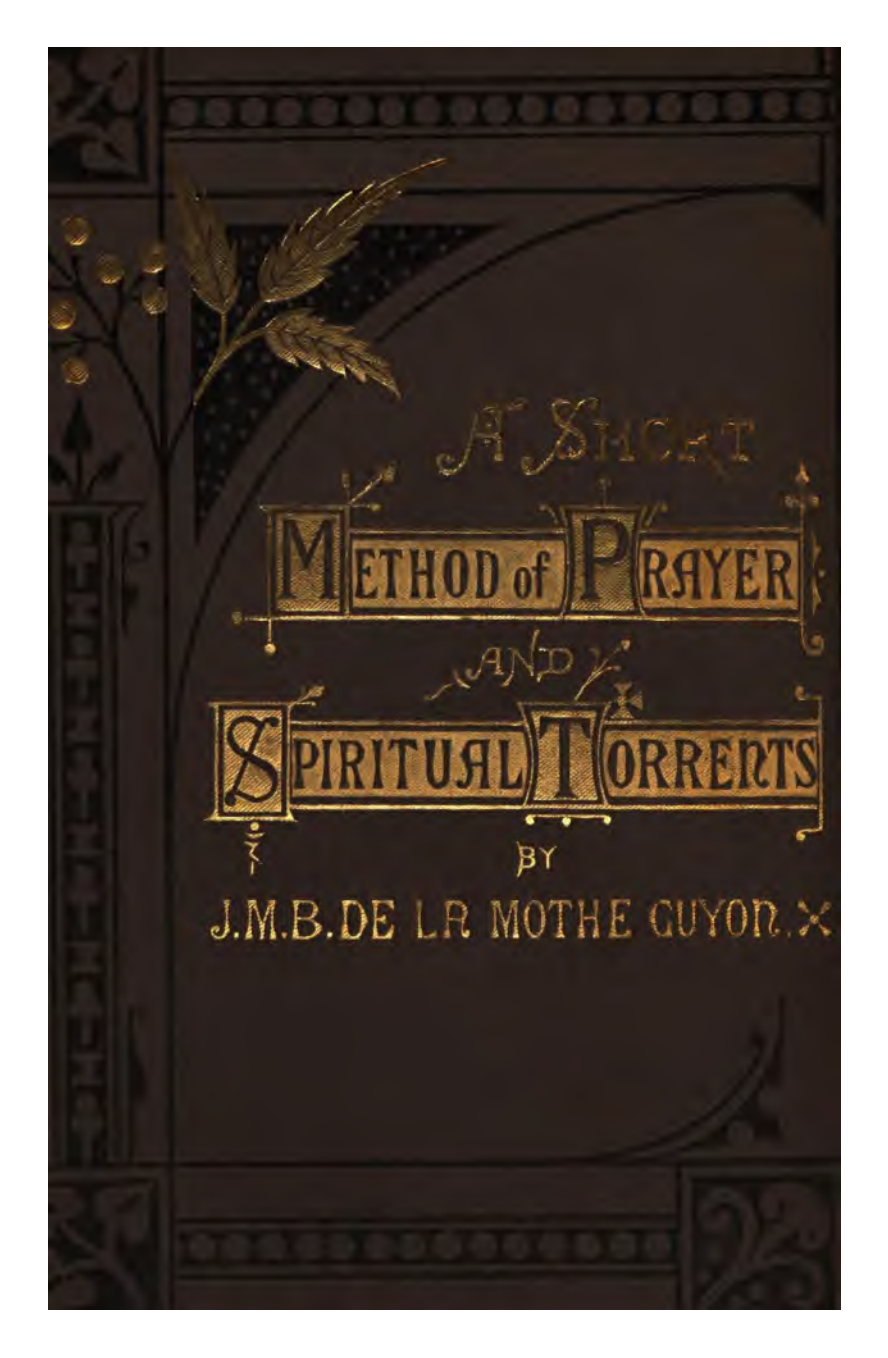
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A SHORT
METHOD of PRAYER
AND
SPIRITUAL TORRENTS
BY

J.M.B. DE LA MOTHE GUYON. ✕



A
SHORT METHOD OF PRAYER
AND
SPIRITUAL TORRENTS.

BY
J. M. B. DE LA MOTHE GUYON.

Translated from the Paris Edition of 1790

BY
A. W. MARSTON.

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*PREFACE TO THE
ENGLISH PROTESTANT EDITION.*



SOME apology is perhaps needed when a Protestant thus brings before Protestant readers the works of a consistent Roman Catholic author. The plea must be, that the doctrine and experience described are essentially Protestant ; and so far from their receiving the assent of the Roman Catholic Church, their author was persecuted for holding and disseminating them.


Of the experience of Madame Guyon, it should be borne in mind, that though the glorious heights of communion with God to which she attained may be scaled by the feeblest of God's chosen ones, yet it is by no means necessary that they should be reached by the same apparently arduous and protracted path along which she was led.

The "Torrents" especially needs to be regarded rather as an account of the personal experience of the author, than as the plan which God invariably, or even usually, adopts in bringing the soul into a state of union with Himself. It is true that, in order that we may "live unto righteousness," we must be

“dead indeed unto sin;” and that there must be a crucifixion of self before the life of Christ can be made manifest in us. It is only when we can say, “I am crucified with Christ,” that we are able to add, “Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” But it does not follow that this inward death must always be as lingering as in the case of Madame Guyon. She tells us herself that the reason was, that she was not wholly resigned to the Divine will, and willing to be deprived of the gifts of God, that she might enjoy the possession of the Giver. This resistance to the will of God implies suffering on the part of the creature, and chastisement on the part of God, in order that He may subdue to Himself what is not voluntarily yielded to Him.

Of the joy of a complete surrender to God, it is not necessary to speak here: thousands of God’s children are realising its blessedness for themselves, and proving that it is no hardship, but a joy unspeakable, to present themselves a living sacrifice to God, to live no longer to themselves, but to Him that died for them, and rose again.

A simple trust in a living, personal Saviour; a putting away by His grace of all that is known to be in opposition to His will; and an entire self-abandonment to Him, that His designs may be worked out in and through us; such is the simple key to the hidden sanctuary of communion.



A SHORT METHOD OF PRAYER.

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A
SHORT METHOD OF PRAYER.

“Walk before me, and be thou perfect.”—GEN. xvii. 1.



AUTHOR'S PREFACE.



I DID not write this little work with the thought of its being given to the public. It was prepared for the help of a few Christians who were desirous of loving God with the whole heart. But so many have requested copies of it, because of the benefit they have derived from its perusal, that I have been asked to publish it.

I have left it in its natural simplicity. I do not condemn the opinions of any: on the contrary, I esteem those which are held by others, and submit all that I have written to the censure of persons of experience and learning. I only ask of all that they will not be content with examining the outside, but that they will penetrate the design of the

writer, which is only to lead others to LOVE GOD, and to serve Him with greater happiness and success, by enabling them to do it in a simple and easy way, fit for the little ones who are not capable of extraordinary things, but who truly desire to *give themselves to God*.

I ask all who may read it, to read without prejudice; and they will discover, under common expressions, a hidden unction, which will lead them to seek for a happiness which all ought to expect to possess.

I use the word *facility*, saying that perfection is easy, because it is easy to find God, *when we seek Him within ourselves*. The passage may be quoted which says, "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me" (John vii. 34). Yet this need not occasion any difficulty; because the same God, who cannot contradict Himself, has said, "He that seeketh findeth" (Matt. vii. 8). *He who seeks God, and who yet is unwilling to forsake sin, will not find Him, because he is seeking Him where He cannot be found*; therefore it is added, "Ye shall die in your sins." *But he who sincerely desires to forsake*

sin, that he may draw near to God, will find Him infallibly.

Many people imagine religion so frightful, and prayer so extraordinary, that they are not willing to strive after them, never expecting to attain to them. But as the difficulty which we see in a thing causes us to despair of succeeding in it, and at the same time removes the desire to undertake it; and as, when a thing appears both desirable and easy to be attained, we give ourselves to it with pleasure, and pursue it boldly; I have been constrained to set forth the advantage and the *facility* of this way.

Oh! if we were persuaded of the goodness of God toward His poor creatures, and of the desire which He has to communicate Himself to them, we should not imagine so many obstacles, and despair so easily of obtaining a good which He is so infinitely desirous of imparting to us.

And if He has not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, is there anything He can refuse us? Assuredly not. We only need a little courage and perseverance. We have so much

of both for trifling temporal interests, and we have none for the "*one thing needful.*"

As for those who find a difficulty in believing that it is easy to find God in this way, let them not believe all that they are told, but rather let them make trial of it, that they may judge for themselves; and they will find that I say very little in comparison with that which is.

Dear reader, study this little work with a simple and sincere heart, with lowliness of mind, without wishing to criticise it, and you will find it of good to you. Receive it with the same spirit as that in which it is given, which is no other than the longing that you may be led *to give yourself unreservedly to God.* My desire is that it may be the means of leading the simple ones and the children to their Father, who loves their humble confidence, and to whom distrust is so displeasing. Seek nothing but *the love of God*; have a sincere desire for your salvation, and you will assuredly find it, following this little unmethodical method.

I do not pretend to elevate my sentiments above those of others, but I relate simply what has been

my own experience as well as that of others, and the advantage which I have found in this simple and natural manner of going to God.

If this book treats of nothing else but the *short and easy method of prayer*, it is because, being written only for that, it cannot speak of other things. It is certain that, if it be read in the spirit in which it has been written, there will be found nothing in it to shock the mind. Those who will make the experience of it will be the most certain of the truth which it contains.

It is to Thee, O Holy Child Jesus, who lovest simplicity and innocence, and who findest Thy delight in the children of men, that is to say, with those amongst men who are willing to become children;—it is to Thee, I say, to give worth and value to this little work, impressing it on the heart, and leading those who read it to seek Thee within themselves, where Thou wilt take Thy rest, receiving the tokens of their love, and giving them proofs of Thine.

It is Thy work, O Divine Child! O uncreated Love! O silent Word! to make Thyself beloved,

tasted, and heard. Thou art able to do it; and I even dare to say that Thou wilt do it, by means of this little work, which is all to Thee, all of Thee, and all for Thee.

A
SHORT METHOD OF PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

ALL ARE COMMANDED TO PRAY — PRAYER THE GREAT
MEANS OF SALVATION, AND POSSIBLE AT ALL TIMES BY
THE MOST SIMPLE.

PRAYER is nothing else but the *application of the heart to God*, and the interior exercise of love. St Paul commands us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. v. 17). Our Lord says: “Take ye heed, watch and pray.” “And what I say unto you, I say unto all” (Mark xiii. 33, 37). All, then, are capable of prayer, and it is the duty of all to engage in it.

But I do not think that all are fit for medita-

tion; and, therefore, it is not that sort of prayer which God demands or desires of them.

My dear friends, whoever you may be, who desire to be saved, come unto God in prayer. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich" (Rev. iii. 18). It is easily to be obtained, far more easily than you could ever imagine.

Come, all ye that are athirst, and take this water of life freely (see Rev. xxii. 17). Do not amuse yourselves by hewing out to yourselves "broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. ii. 13). Come, hungry souls, who find nothing that can satisfy you, and you shall be *filled*. Come, poor afflicted ones, weighed down with griefs and sorrows, and you shall be comforted. Come, sick ones, to the great Physician, and do not fear to approach Him because you are so weak and diseased: expose all your diseases to Him, and they shall be healed.

Come, children, to your Father; He will receive you with open arms of love. Come, wandering and scattered sheep, to your Shepherd. Come, sinners, to your Saviour. Come, ignorant and foolish

ones, who believe yourselves incapable of prayer ; it is you who are the most fitted for it. Come all without exception ; Jesus Christ calls you all.

Let those only refuse to come who have no heart. The invitation is not for them ; for we must have a heart in order to love. But who is indeed without heart ? Oh, come and give that heart to God, and learn in the place of prayer how to do it ! All those who long for prayer are capable of it, who have ordinary grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is freely promised to all who ask it.

Prayer is the key of perfection and of sovereign happiness ; it is the efficacious means of getting rid of all vices and of acquiring all virtues ; for the way to become perfect is to live in the presence of God. He tells us this Himself : “ Walk before me, and be thou perfect ” (Gen. xvii. 1). Prayer alone can bring you into His presence, and keep you there continually.

What we need, then, is an attitude of prayer, in which we can *constantly* abide, and out of which exterior occupations cannot draw us ; a prayer which

can be offered alike by princes, kings, prelates, magistrates, soldiers, children, artisans, labourers, women, and the sick. This prayer is not mental, but *of the heart*.

It is not a prayer of thought alone, because the mind of man is so limited, that while it is occupied with one thing it cannot be thinking of another. But it is the PRAYER OF THE HEART, which cannot be interrupted by the occupations of the mind. Nothing can interrupt the prayer of the heart but unruly affections ; and when once we have tasted of the love of God, it is impossible to find our delight in anything but Himself.

Nothing is easier than to have God and to live upon Him. He is more truly in us than we are in ourselves. He is more anxious to give Himself to us than we are to possess Him. All that we want is to know the way to seek Him, which is so easy and so natural, that breathing itself is not more so.

Oh, you who imagine yourselves incapable of religious feeling, you may live in prayer and in

God as easily and as continuously as you live by the air you breathe. Will you not, then, be inexcusable if you neglect to do it, after you have learned the way?

CHAPTER II.

FIRST DEGREE OF PRAYER—MEDITATION AND MEDITATIVE
READING—THE LORD'S PRAYER—PASSAGE FROM THE
FIRST DEGREE TO THE SECOND.

THERE are two means by which we may be led into the higher forms of prayer. One is *Meditation*, the other is *Meditative Reading*. By meditative reading I mean the taking of some truths, either doctrinal or practical—the latter rather than the former—and reading them in this way :—Take the truth which has presented itself to you, and read two or three lines, seeking to enter into the full meaning of the words, and go on no further so long as you find satisfaction in them ; leave the place only when it becomes insipid. After that, take another passage, and do the same, not reading more than half a page at once.

It is not so much from the amount read that we derive profit, as from the manner of reading.

Those people who get through so much do not profit from it; the bees can only draw the juice from the flowers by resting on them, not by flying round them. Much reading is more for scholastic than for spiritual science; but in order to derive profit from spiritual books, we should read them in this way; and I am sure that this manner of reading accustoms us gradually to prayer, and gives us a deeper desire for it. The other way is *Meditation*, in which we should engage at a chosen time, and not in the hour given to reading. I think the way to enter into it is this:—After having brought ourselves into the presence of God by a definite act of faith, we should read something substantial, not so much to reason upon it, as to fix the attention, observing that the principal exercise should be the presence of God, and that the subject should rather fix the attention than exercise reason.

This *faith in the presence of God within our hearts* must lead us to enter within ourselves, collecting our thoughts, and preventing their wandering; this is an effectual way of getting rid of

distracting thoughts, and of losing sight of outward things, in order to draw near to God, who can only be found in the secret place of our hearts, which is the *sancta-sanctorum* in which He dwells.

He has promised that if any one keeps His commandments, He will come to him, and *make His abode* with him (John xiv. 23). St Augustine reproaches himself for the time he lost through not having sought God at first in this way.

When, then, we are thus buried in ourselves, and deeply penetrated with the presence of God within us—when the senses are all drawn from the circumference to the centre, which, though it is not easily accomplished at first, becomes quite natural afterwards—when the soul is thus gathered up within itself, and is sweetly occupied with the truth read, not in reasoning upon it, but in feeding upon it, and exciting the will by the affection rather than the understanding by consideration: the *affection* being thus touched, must be suffered to *repose* sweetly and at peace, *swallowing* what it has tasted.

As a person who only masticated an excellent meat would not be nourished by it, although he would be sensible of its taste, unless he ceased this movement in order to swallow it ; so when the affection is stirred, if we seek continually to stir it, we extinguish its fire, and thus deprive the soul of its nourishment. We must swallow by a *loving repose* (full of respect and confidence) what we have masticated and tasted. This method is very necessary, and would advance the soul in a short time more than any other would do in several years.

But as I said that the direct and principal exercise should be the *sense of the presence of God*, we must most faithfully *recall the senses* when they wander.

This is a short and efficacious way of fighting with distractions ; because those who endeavour directly to oppose them, irritate and increase them ; but by losing ourselves in the thought of a present God, and suffering our thoughts to be drawn to Him, we combat them indirectly, and without thinking of them, but in an effectual manner. And here let me warn beginners not to run from one

truth to another, from one subject to another ; but to keep themselves to one so long as they feel a taste for it : this is the way to enter deeply into truths, to taste them, and to have them impressed upon us. I say it is difficult at first thus to retire within ourselves, because of the habits, which are natural to us, of being taken up with the outside ; but when we are a little accustomed to it, it becomes exceedingly easy ; both because we have formed the habit of it, and because God, who only desires to communicate Himself to us, sends us abundant grace, and an experimental sense of His presence, which renders it easy.

Let us apply this method to the Lord's Prayer. We say "Our Father," thinking that God is within us, and will indeed be our Father. After having pronounced this word *Father*, we remain a few moments in silence, waiting for this heavenly Father to make known His will to us. Then we ask this King of Glory *to reign* within us, abandoning ourselves to Him, that He may do it, and yielding to Him the right that He has over us. If we feel here an inclination to peace and silence,

we should not continue, but remain thus so long as the condition may last ; after which we proceed to the second petition, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." We then desire that God may accomplish, in us and by us, all His will ; we give up to God our heart and our liberty, that He may dispose of them at His pleasure. Then, seeing that the occupation of the will should be love, we desire to love, and we ask God to give us *His love*. But all this is done quietly, peacefully ; and so on with the rest of the prayer.

At other times we hold ourselves in the position of sheep near to the Shepherd, asking of Him our true food. O Divine Shepherd ! Thou feedest Thy sheep with Thine own hand, and Thou art their food from day to day. We may also bring before Him our family desires ; but it must all be done with the remembrance by faith of the presence of God within us.

We can form no imagination of what God is : a lively faith in His presence is sufficient ; for we can conceive no image of God, though we may of Christ, regarding Him as crucified, or as a child,

or in some other condition, provided that we always seek Him within ourselves.

At other times we come to Him as to a Physician, bringing our maladies to Him that He may heal them; but always without effort, with a short silence from time to time, that the silence may be mingled with the action, gradually lengthening the silence and shortening the spoken prayer, until at length, as we yield to the operation of God, He gains the supremacy. When the presence of God is given, and the soul begins to taste of silence and repose, this experimental sense of the presence of God introduces it to the second degree of prayer.

CHAPTER III.

SECOND DEGREE OF PRAYER, CALLED HERE "THE PRAYER OF SIMPLICITY."

THE second degree has been variously termed *Contemplation, The Prayer of Silence, and of repose*; while others again have called it the *Prayer of Simplicity*; and it is of this last term that I shall make use here, being more appropriate than that of *Contemplation*, which signifies a degree of prayer more advanced than that of which I speak.

After a time, as I have said, the soul becomes sensible of a facility in recognising the presence of God; it collects itself more easily; prayer becomes natural and pleasant; it knows that it leads to God; and it perceives the smell of His perfumes.

Then it must change its method, and observe carefully what I am about to say, without being astonished at its apparent implausibility.

First of all, when you bring yourself into the presence of God by faith, remain a short time in an attitude of respectful silence. If from the beginning, in making this act of faith, you are sensible of a little taste of the presence of God, remain as you are without troubling yourself on any subject, and keep that which has been given you, so long as it may remain.

If it leaves you, excite your will by means of some tender affection, and if you then find that your former state of peace has returned, remain in it. The fire must be blown softly, and as soon as it is lighted, cease to blow it, or you will put it out. It is also necessary that you should go to God, not so much to obtain something from Him, as to please Him, and to do His will; for a servant who only serves his master in proportion to the recompense he receives, is unworthy of any remuneration.

Go, then, to prayer, not only to enjoy God, but

to be as He wills : this will keep you equal in times of barrenness and in times of abundance ; and you will not be dismayed by the repulses of God, nor by His apparent indifference.

CHAPTER IV.

ON SPIRITUAL DRYNESS.

AS God's only desire is to give Himself to the loving soul who desires to seek Him, He often hides Himself in order to arouse it, and compel it to seek Him with love and fidelity. But how does He reward the faithfulness of His beloved! And how are His apparent flights followed by loving caresses!

The soul imagines that it is a proof of its fidelity and of its increased love that it seeks God with an effort, or that at least such seeking will soon lead to His return.

But no! This is not the way in this degree. With a loving impatience, with deep humility and abasement, with an affection deep and yet restful, with a respectful silence, you must await the return of your Beloved.

You will thus show Him that it is *Himself* alone that you love, and His good pleasure, and not the pleasure that you find in loving Him. Therefore it is said, "Make not haste in time of trouble. Cleave unto Him, and depart not away, that thou mayest be increased at thy last end" (Ecclus. ii. 2, 3). Suffer the suspensions and the delays of the visible consolations of God.

Be patient in prayer, even though you should do nothing all your life but wait in patience, with a heart humbled, abandoned, resigned, and content for the return of your Beloved. Oh, excellent prayer! How it moves the heart of God, and obliges Him to return more than anything else!

CHAPTER V.

ABANDONMENT TO GOD—ITS FRUIT AND ITS IRREVOCA-
BILITY—IN WHAT IT CONSISTS—GOD EXHORTS US TO
IT.

IT is here that true *abandonment* and consecration to God should commence, by our being deeply convinced that all which happens to us moment by moment is the will of God, and therefore all that is necessary to us.

This conviction will render us contented with everything, and will make us see the commonest events in God, and not in the creature.

I beg of you, whoever you may be, who are desirous of giving yourselves to God, not to take yourselves back when once you are given to Him, and to remember that a thing once given away is no longer at your disposal. *Abandonment* is the key to the inner life : he who is thoroughly abandoned will soon be perfect.

You must, then, hold firmly to your abandonment, without listening to reason or to reflection. A great faith makes a great abandonment; you must trust wholly in God, against hope believing in hope (Rom. iv. 18). *Abandonment* is the casting off of all care of ourselves, to leave ourselves to be guided entirely by God.

All Christians are exhorted to abandonment, for it is said to all, "Take no thought for the morrow; for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matt. vi. 32, 34). "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. iii. 6). "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established" (Prov. xvi. 3). "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Ps. xxxvii. 5).

Abandonment, then, ought to be an utter leaving of ourselves, both outwardly and inwardly, in the hands of God, forgetting ourselves, and thinking only of God. By this means the heart is kept always free and contented.

Practically it should be a continual loss of our

own will in the will of God, a renunciation of all natural inclinations, however good they may appear, in order that we may be left free to choose only as God chooses : we should be indifferent to all things, whether temporal or spiritual, for the body or the soul ; leaving the past in forgetfulness, the future to providence, and giving the present to God ; contented with the present moment, which brings with it God's eternal will for us ; attributing nothing which happens to us to the creature, but seeing all things in God, and regarding them as coming infallibly from His hand, with the exception only of our own sin.

Leave yourselves, then, to be guided by God as He will, whether as regards the inner or the outward life.

CHAPTER VI.

OF SUFFERING WHICH MUST BE ACCEPTED AS FROM GOD—ITS FRUITS.

BE content with all the suffering that God may lay upon you. If you will love Him purely, you will be as willing to follow Him to Calvary as to Tabor.

He must be loved as much on Calvary as on Tabor, since it is there that He makes the greatest manifestation of His love.

Do not act, then, like those people who give themselves at one time, and take themselves back at another. They give themselves to be caressed, and take themselves back when they are crucified; or else they seek for consolation in the creature.

You can only find consolation in the love of the cross and in complete abandonment. He who has no love for the cross has no love for God (see

Matt. xvi. 24). It is impossible to love God without loving the cross ; and a heart which has learned to love the cross finds sweetness, joy, and pleasure even in the bitterest things. "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet" (Prov. xxvii. 7), because it is as hungry for the cross as it is hungry for God.

The cross gives God, and God gives the cross. Abandonment and the cross go together. As soon as you are sensible that something is repugnant to you which presents itself to you in the light of suffering, abandon yourself at once to God for that very thing, and present yourself as a sacrifice to Him : you will see that, when the cross comes, it will have lost much of its weight, because you will desire it. This will not prevent your being sensible of its weight. Some people imagine that it is not suffering to feel the cross. The feeling of suffering is one of the principal parts of suffering itself. Jesus Himself was willing to suffer it in its intensity.

Often the cross is borne with weakness, at other times with strength : all should be equal in the will of God.

CHAPTER VII.

ON MYSTERIES—GOD GIVES THEM HERE IN REALITY.

IT will be objected that, by this way, mysteries will not be made known. It is just the contrary; they are given to the soul in reality. Jesus Christ, to whom it is abandoned, and whom it follows as the *Way*, whom it hears as the *Truth*, and who animates it as the *Life*, impressing Himself upon it, imparts to it His own condition.

To bear the conditions of Christ is something far greater than merely to consider those conditions. Paul bore the conditions of Christ on his body. "I bear in my body," he says, "the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. vi. 17). But he does not say that he reasoned about them.

Often Christ gives in this state of abandonment views of His conditions in a striking manner. We must receive equally all the dispositions in which

He may be pleased to place us, choosing for ourselves to abide near to Him, and to be annihilated before Him, but receiving equally all that He gives us, light or darkness, facility or barrenness, strength or weakness, sweetness or bitterness, temptations or distractions, sorrow, care, uncertainty ; none of these things ought to move us.

There are some persons to whom God is continually revealing His mysteries : let them be faithful to them. But when God sees fit to remove them, let them suffer them to be taken.

Others are troubled because no mysteries are made known to them : this is needless, since a loving attention to God includes all particular devotion, and that which is united to God alone, by its rest in Him, is instructed in a most excellent manner in all mysteries. He who loves God loves all that is of Him.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON VIRTUE—ALL VIRTUES GIVEN WITH GOD IN THIS
DEGREE OF THE PRAYER OF THE HEART.

THIS is the short and the sure way of acquiring virtue ; because, God being the principle of all virtue, we possess all virtue in possessing God.

More than this, I say that all virtue which is not given inwardly is a mask of virtue, and like a garment that can be taken off, and will wear out. But virtue communicated fundamentally is essential, true, and permanent. "The King's daughter is all glorious within" (Ps. xlv. 13). And there are none who practise virtue more constantly than those who acquire it in this way, though virtue is not a distinct subject of their thought.

How hungry these loving ones are after suffering ! They think only of what can please their Beloved, and they begin to neglect themselves, and to think

less of themselves. The more they love God, the more they hate themselves.

Oh, if all could learn this method, so easy that it is suited for all, for the most ignorant as for the most learned, how easily the whole Church would be reformed! You only need to love. St Augustine says, "Love, and do as you please;" for when we love perfectly, we shall not desire to do anything that could be displeasing to our Beloved.

CHAPTER IX.

OF PERFECT CONVERSION, WHICH IS AN EFFECT OF THIS METHOD OF PRAYER—TWO OF ITS AIDS, THE ATTRACTION OF GOD, AND THE CENTRAL INCLINATION OF THE SOUL.

“TURN ye unto Him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted” (Isa. xxxi. 6).

Conversion is nothing else but a turning from the creature to God. Conversion is not perfect, though it is necessary for salvation, when it is merely a turning from sin to grace. To be complete, it must be a turning from without to within.

The soul, being turned in the direction of God, has a great facility for remaining converted to Him. The longer it is converted, the nearer it approaches to God, and attaches itself to Him; and the nearer it approaches to God, the more it becomes necessarily drawn from the creature, which is opposed to God.

But this cannot be done by a violent effort of the creature ; all that it can do is to remain turned in the direction of God in a perpetual adherence.

God has an *attracting virtue*, which draws the soul more strongly towards Himself ; and in attracting it, He purifies it : as we see the sun attracting a dense vapour, and gradually, without any other effort on the part of the vapour than that of letting itself be drawn, the sun, by bringing it near to himself, refines and purifies it.

There is, however, this difference, that the vapour is not drawn freely, and does not follow willingly, as is the case with the soul.

This manner of turning within is very simple, and makes the soul advance naturally and without effort ; because God is its centre. The centre has always a strong attractive power ; and the larger the centre, the stronger is its attractive force.

Besides this attraction of the centre, there is given to all natural objects a strong tendency to become united with their centre. As soon as anything is turned in the direction of its centre, unless it be stopped by some invincible obstacle, it rushes to-

wards it with extreme velocity. A stone in the air is no sooner let loose, and turned towards the earth, than it tends to it by its own weight as its centre. It is the same with fire and water, which, being no longer arrested, run incessantly towards their centre.

Now I say that the soul, by the effort it has made in inward recollection, being turned towards its centre, without any other effort, but simply by the weight of love, falls towards its centre ; and the more it remains quiet and at rest, making no movement of its own, the more rapidly it will advance, because it thus allows that attractive virtue to draw it.

All the care, then, that we need have is to promote this inward recollection as much as possible, not being astonished at the difficulty we may find in this exercise, which will soon be recompensed with a wonderful co-operation on the part of God, which will render it very easy. When the passions rise, a look towards God, who is present within us, easily deadens them. Any other resistance would irritate rather than appease them.

CHAPTER X.

HIGHER DEGREE OF PRAYER, WHICH IS THAT OF THE SIMPLE
PRESENCE OF GOD, OR ACTIVE CONTEMPLATION.

THE soul, faithfully exercising itself in the affection and love of its God, is astonished to find Him taking complete possession of it.

His presence becomes so natural, that it would be impossible not to have it: it becomes habitual to the soul, which is also conscious of a great calm spreading over it. Its prayer is all silence, and God imparts to it an intrinsic love, which is the commencement of ineffable happiness.

Oh, if I could describe the infinite degrees which follow! But I must stop here, since I am writing for beginners, and wait till God shall bring to light what may be useful to those more advanced.* I

* This subject is pursued in the treatise entitled "Spiritual Torrents."

can only say, that, at this point, it is most important that all natural operation should cease, that God may act alone : "Be still, and know that I am God," is His own word by David (Ps. xlv. 10).

But man is so attached to his own works, that he cannot believe God is working, unless he can feel, know, and distinguish His operation. He does not see that it is the speed of his course which prevents his seeing the extent of his advancement ; and that the operation of God becoming more abundant, absorbs that of the creature, as we see that the sun, in proportion as he rises, absorbs the light of the stars, which were easily distinguishable before he appeared. It is not the want of light, but an excess of light, which prevents our distinguishing the stars.

It is the same here ; man can no longer distinguish his own operation, because the strong light absorbs all his little distinct lights, and makes them fade away entirely, because God's excess surpasses them all. So that those who accuse this degree of prayer of being a state of *idleness*, are greatly deceived ; and only speak thus from want of experience. Oh, if they would only prove it ! in how short a time they

would become experimentally acquainted with this matter !

I say, then, that this failure of work does not spring from scarcity, but from abundance.

Two classes of persons are silent : the one because they have nothing to say, the other because they have too much. It is thus in this degree. We are silent from excess, not from want.

Water causes death to two persons in very different ways. One dies of thirst, another is drowned : the one dies from want, the other from abundance. So here it is abundance which causes the cessation of natural operation. It is therefore important in this degree to remain as much as possible in stillness.

At the commencement of this prayer, a movement of affection is necessary ; but when grace begins to flow into us, we have nothing to do but to remain at rest, and take all that God gives. Any other movement would prevent our profiting by this grace, which is given in order to draw us into the *rest of love*.

The soul in this peaceful attitude of prayer falls into a mystic sleep, in which all its natural powers are silenced, until that which had been temporary

becomes its permanent condition. You see that the soul is thus led, without effort, without study, without artifice.

The heart is not a fortified place, which must be taken by cannonading and violence : it is a kingdom of peace, which is possessed by love. Gently following in His train, you will soon reach the degree of *intuitive* prayer. God asks nothing extraordinary and difficult : on the contrary, He is most pleased with childlike simplicity.

The grandest part of religion is the most simple. It is the same with natural things. Do you wish to get to the sea ? Embark upon a river, and insensibly and without effort you will be taken to it. Do you wish to get to God ? Take His way, so quiet, so easy, and in a little while you will be taken to Him in a manner that will surprise you. Oh, if only you would try it ! How soon you would see that I am telling you only too little, and that the experience would far surpass any description that could be given ! What do you fear ? Why do you not throw yourself at once into the arms of Love, who only stretched them out upon the cross in order to take you in ?

What risk can there be in trusting God, and abandoning yourself to Him? Oh, He will not deceive you, unless it be by giving you far more than you ever expected: while those who expect everything from themselves may well take to themselves the reproach which God utters by the mouth of Isaiah: "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope" (Isa. lvii. 10).

CHAPTER XI.

OF REST IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD—ITS FRUITS—INWARD
SILENCE—GOD COMMANDS IT—OUTWARD SILENCE.

THE soul, being brought to this place, needs no other preparation than that of repose: for *the presence of God* during the day, which is the great result of prayer, or rather prayer itself, begins to be *intuitive* and *almost continual*. The soul is conscious of a deep inward happiness, and feels that God is in it more truly than it is in itself. It has only one thing to do in order to find God, which is to retire within itself. As soon as the eyes are closed, it finds itself in prayer.

It is astonished at this infinite happiness; there is carried on within it a conversation which outward things cannot interrupt. It might be said of this method of prayer, as was said of Wisdom, "All good things together come to me with her" (Wisdom of

Solomon vii. 11), for virtue flows naturally into the soul, and is practised so easily, that it seems to be quite natural to it. It has within it a germ of life and fruitfulness, which gives it a facility for all good, and an insensibility to all evil. Let it then remain faithful, and seek no other frame of mind than that of simple rest. It has only to suffer itself to be filled with this divine effusion.

“The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him” (Hab. ii. 20). The reason why inward silence is so necessary is, that Christ, being the eternal and essential Word, in order that He may be received into the soul, there must be a disposition corresponding with what He is. Now it is certain that in order to receive words we must listen. Hearing is the sense given to enable us to receive the words which are communicated to us. Hearing is rather a passive than an active sense, receiving, and not communicating. Christ being the Word which is to be communicated, the soul must be attentive to this Word which speaks within it.

This is why we are so often exhorted to listen to God, and to be attentive to His voice. Many pas-

sages might be quoted. I will be content to mention a few: "Hearken unto me, O my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation" (Isa. li. 4). "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel" (Isa. xlvi. 31). "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty" (Ps. xlv. 10, 11).

We must *listen* to God, and be attentive to Him, *forgetting ourselves* and all self-interest. These two actions, or rather passions—for this condition is essentially a passive one—arouse in God a "desire" towards the "beauty" He has Himself communicated.

Outward silence is extremely necessary for the cultivation of inward silence, and it is impossible to acquire inward silence without having a love for silence and solitude.

God tells us by the mouth of His prophet, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart" (marginal reading of Hosea ii. 14).

To be inwardly occupied with God, and outwardly occupied with countless trifles, this is impossible.

It will be a small matter to pray, and to retire within ourselves for half an hour or an hour, if we do not retain the unction and the spirit of prayer during the day.

CHAPTER XII

SELF-EXAMINATION AND CONFESSION.

SELF-EXAMINATION should always precede confession. Those who arrive at this degree should expose themselves to God, who will not fail to enlighten them, and to make known to them the nature of their faults. This examination must be conducted in peace and tranquillity, expecting more from God than from our own research the knowledge of our sins.

When we examine ourselves with an effort, we easily make mistakes. We “call evil good, and good evil;” and self-esteem easily deceives us. But when we remain exposed to the searching gaze of God, that Divine Sun brings to light even the smallest atoms. We must then, for self-examination, abandon ourselves utterly to God.

When we are in this degree of prayer, God is not

slow to reveal to us all the faults we commit. We have no sooner sinned than we feel a burning reproach.

It is God Himself who conducts an examination which nothing escapes, and we have only to turn towards God, and suffer the pain and the correction which He gives. As this examination by God is continual, we can no longer examine ourselves; and if we are faithful to our abandonment to God, we shall soon be better examined by the divine light than we could be by all our own efforts. Experience will make this known. One thing which often causes astonishment to the soul is, that when it is conscious of a sin, and comes to confess it to God, instead of feeling regret and contrition, such as it formerly felt, a sweet and gentle love takes possession of it.

Not having experienced this before, it supposes that it ought to draw itself out of this condition to make a definite act of contrition. But it does not see that, by doing this, it would lose true contrition, which is this *intuitive love*, infinitely greater than anything it could create for itself. It is a higher action, which includes the others, with greater perfection, though these are not possessed distinctly.

We should not seek to do anything for ourselves when God acts more excellently in us and for us. It is hating sin as God hates it to hate it in this way. This love, which is the operation of God in the soul, is the purest of all love. All we have to do then is to remain as we are.

Another remarkable thing is, that we often forget our faults, and find it difficult to remember them ; but this must not trouble us, for two reasons : The first, that this very forgetfulness is a proof that the sin has been atoned for, and it is better to forget all that concerns ourselves, that we may remember God alone. The second reason is, that God does not fail, whenever confession is needful, to show to the soul its greatest faults, for then it is He Himself who examines it.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON READING—VOCAL PRAYER—REQUESTS.

THE proper manner of reading in this degree is, as soon as we feel attracted to meditation, to cease reading, and remain at rest.

The soul is no sooner called to inward silence, than it should cease to utter vocal prayers; saying but little at any time, and when it does say them, if it finds any difficulty, or feels itself drawn to silence, it should remain silent, and make no effort to pray, leaving itself to the guidance of the Spirit of God.

The soul will find that it cannot, as formerly, present definite requests to God. This need not surprise it, for it is now that "the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God. The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought;

but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26, 27).

We must second the designs of God, which are to strip the soul of its own works, to substitute His in their place.

Let Him work then, and bind yourself to nothing of your own. However good it may appear to you, it cannot be so if it comes in the way of God's will for you. The will of God is preferable to all other good. Seek not your own interests, but live by abandonment and by faith.

It is here that *faith* begins to operate wonderfully in the soul.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FAULTS COMMITTED IN THIS DEGREE—DISTRACTIONS,
TEMPTATIONS—THE COURSE TO BE PURSUED RESPECT-
ING THEM.

AS soon as we fall into a fault, or have wandered, we must turn again within ourselves; because this fault having turned us from God, we should as soon as possible turn towards Him, and suffer the penitence which He Himself will give.

It is of great importance that we should not be anxious about these faults, because the anxiety only springs from a secret pride and a love of our own excellence. We are troubled at feeling what we are.

If we become discouraged, we shall grow weaker yet; and reflection upon our faults produces a vexation which is worse than the sin itself.

A truly humble soul does not marvel at its weakness, and the more it perceives its wretchedness, the more it abandons itself to God, and seeks to

remain near to Him, knowing how deeply it needs His help. God's own word to us is, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Ps. xxxii. 8).

In distractions or temptations, instead of combating them directly, which would only serve to augment them, and to wean us from God, with whom alone we ought to be occupied, we should simply turn away from them, and draw nearer to God; as a little child, seeing a fierce animal approaching it, would not stay to fight it, nor even to look at it, but would run for shelter to its mother's arms, where it would be safe. "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early" (Ps. xlvi. 5).

If we adopt any other course of action, if we attempt to attack our enemies in our weakness, we shall be wounded, even if we are not entirely defeated; but remaining in the simple presence of God, we find ourselves immediately fortified.

This was what David did: he says, "I have set 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 rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope." It is also said by Moses, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exod. xiv. 14).

CHAPTER XV.

PRAYER AND SACRIFICE EXPLAINED BY THE SIMILITUDE OF
A PERFUME—OUR ANNIHILATION IN THIS SACRIFICE—
SOLIDITY AND FRUITFULNESS OF THIS PRAYER AS SET
FORTH IN THE GOSPEL.

PRAYER ought to be both petition and sacrifice.

Prayer, according to the testimony of St John, is an incense, whose perfume rises to God. . Therefore it is said in the Revelation (chap. viii. 3), that an angel held a censer, which contained the incense of the prayers of saints.

Prayer is an outpouring of the heart in the presence of God. "I have poured out my soul before the Lord," said the mother of Samuel (1 Sam. i. 15). Thus the prayers of the Magi at the feet of the infant Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem were signified by the incense which they offered.

Prayer is the heat of love, which melts and dissolves the soul, and carries it to God. In propor-

tion as it melts, it gives out its odour, and this odour comes from the love which burns it.

This is what the Bride meant when she said, "While the King sitteth at His table, my spike-nard sendeth forth the smell thereof" (Cant. i. 12). The table is the heart. When God is there, and we are kept near to Him, in His presence, this presence of God melts and dissolves the hardness of our hearts, and as they melt, they give forth their perfume. Therefore the Bridegroom, seeing His Bride thus melted by the speech of her Beloved, says, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?" (Cant. iii. 6).

Thus the soul rises up towards its God. But in order to this, it must suffer itself to be destroyed and annihilated by the force of love. This is a state of *sacrifice* essential to the Christian religion, by which the soul suffers itself to be destroyed and annihilated to render homage to the sovereignty of God; as it is written, "The power of the Lord is great, and He is honoured of the lowly" (Ecclus. iii. 20). And the destruction of our own being confesses the sovereign being of God.

We must cease to be, so that the Spirit of the Word may be in us. In order that He may come to us, we must yield our life to Him, and die to self that He may live in us, and that we being dead, our life may be hidden with Christ in God (Col. iii. 3).

“Come unto me,” says God, “all ye that be desirous of me, and fill yourselves with my fruits” (Ecclus. xxiv. 19). But how can we be filled with God? Only by being emptied of self, and going out of ourselves in order to be lost in Him.

Now, this can never be brought about except by our becoming nothing. Nothingness is true prayer, which renders to God “honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever” (Rev. v. 13).

This prayer is the prayer of truth. It is worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. In *spirit*, because we are by it drawn out of our human and carnal action, to enter into the purity of the Spirit, who prays in us; and in *truth*, because the soul is led into the truth of the ALL of God, and the NOTHING of the creature.

There are but these two truths, the ALL and the NOTHING. All the rest is untruth.

We can only honour the ALL of God by our NOTHINGNESS ; and we have no sooner become nothing, than God, who will not suffer us to be empty, fills us with Himself. Oh, if all knew the blessings which come to the soul by this prayer, they would be satisfied with no others : it is the pearl of great price ; it is the hidden treasure. He who finds it gladly sells all that he has to buy it (Matt. xiii. 44, 46). It is the well of living water, which springs up into everlasting life (John iv. 14). It is the practice of the pure maxims of the gospel.

Does not Christ Himself tell us that the kingdom of God is within us ? (Luke xvii. 21). This kingdom is set up in two ways. The first is, when God is so thoroughly master of us that nothing resists Him : then our heart is truly His kingdom. The other way is, that by possessing God, who is the sovereign Lord, we possess the kingdom of God, which is the height of felicity, and the end for which we were created. As it has been said, *to serve God is to reign.*

The end for which we were created is to enjoy God in this life, and men do not believe it !

CHAPTER XVI.

THIS STATE OF PRAYER NOT ONE OF IDLENESS, BUT OF NOBLE ACTION, WROUGHT BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, AND IN DEPENDENCE UPON HIM—THE COMMUNICATION OF HIS LIFE AND UNION.

SOME people, hearing of the prayer of silence, have wrongly imagined that the soul remains *inactive, lifeless, and without movement.*

But the truth is, that its action is more noble and more extensive than it ever was before it entered this degree, since it is moved by God Himself, and acted upon by His Spirit. St Paul desires that we should be *led by the Spirit of God* (Rom. viii. 14). I do not say that there must be no action, but that we must act in dependence upon the divine movement. This is admirably set forth by Ezekiel. The prophet saw wheels which had the spirit of life, and wherever this spirit was to go, they went; they went on, or stood, or were lifted up, as they were moved,

for the spirit of life was in them: but they never went back (see Ezek. i. 19-21). It should be the same with the soul: it should suffer itself to be moved and guided by the living Spirit who is in it, following His direction, and no other. Now this Spirit will never lead it to go backwards, that is, to reflect upon the creature, or to lean upon itself, but always to go forward, pressing continually towards the mark.

This action of the soul is a restful action. When it acts of itself, it acts with effort; and is therefore more conscious of its action. But when it acts in dependence upon the Spirit of grace, its action is so free, so easy, so natural, that it does not seem to act at all. "He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me" (Ps. xviii. 19).

As soon as the soul has commenced its course towards its centre,* from that moment its action becomes vigorous—that is, its course towards the centre which attracts it, which infinitely surpasses the velocity of any other movement.

It is action then, but an action so *noble*, so *peaceful*,

* See chap. ix.

so *tranquil*, that it seems to the soul as though it were not acting at all; because it rests, as it were, naturally. When a wheel is only turning with a moderate speed, it can easily be distinguished; but when it goes quickly, no part of it can be distinctly seen. So the soul which remains at rest in God has an action infinitely noble and exalted, yet very peaceful. The greater its peace, the greater is its velocity, because it is abandoned to the Spirit, who moves it and makes it act. This Spirit is God Himself, who draws us, and in drawing makes us run to Him, as the Bride well knew when she said, "Draw me, we will run" (Cant. i. 4). Draw me, O my Divine Centre, by my inmost heart: my powers and my sensibilities will run at Thy attraction! This attraction alone is a balm which heals me, and a perfume which draws. "We will run," she says, "because of the savour of Thy good ointments." This attracting virtue is *very strong*, but the soul follows it *very gladly*; and as it is equally strong and sweet, it attracts by its strength and delights by its sweetness.

The Bride says, "Draw me, we will run." She speaks of herself, and to herself: "Draw *me*;" there

is the unity of the object which is attracted: "*We* will run;" there is the correspondence of all the powers and sensibilities which follow in the train of the centre of the heart.

It is not then a question of remaining in idleness, but of acting *in dependence upon the Spirit of God*, who animates us, since it is in Him that "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 23). This calm dependence upon the Spirit of God is absolutely necessary, and causes the soul in a short time to attain the simplicity and unity in which it was created. It was created one and simple, like God. In order, then, to answer the end of our creation, we must quit the multiplicity of our own actions, to enter into the simplicity and unity of God, in whose image we were created (Gen. i. 27). The Spirit of God is "one only," "yet manifold" (Wisdom of Solomon vii. 22), and its unity does not prevent its multiplicity. We enter into God's unity when we are united to His Spirit, because then we have the same Spirit that He has; and we are multiplied outwardly, as regards His dispositions, without leaving the unity.

So that, as God acts infinitely, and we are of one spirit with Him, we act much more than we could do by our own action. We must suffer ourselves to be guided by Wisdom. This "Wisdom" is more moving than any motion (Wisdom of Solomon vii. 24). Let us, then, remain in dependence upon His action, and our action will be vigorous indeed.

"All things were made by (the Word); and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John i. 3). God, in creating us, created us in His image, after His likeness (Gen. i. 26). He gave to us the Spirit of the Word by the breath of life (Gen. ii. 7), which He breathed into us when we were created in the image of God, by the participation of the life of the Word, who is the image of His Father. Now this life is one, simple, pure, intimate, and fruitful.

The devil having disfigured this beautiful image, it became necessary that this same Word, whose breath had been breathed into us at our creation, should come to restore it. It was necessary that it should be He, because He is the image of the Father; and a defaced image cannot be repaired by

its own action, but by the action of him who seeks to restore it. Our *action* then should be, to *put ourselves* into a position to suffer the action of God, and to allow the Word to retrace His image in us. An image, if it could move, would by its movement prevent the sculptor's perfecting it. Every movement of our own hinders the work of the Heavenly Sculptor, and produces false features.

We must then remain silent, and only move as He moves us. Jesus Christ has *life in Himself* (John v. 26), and He must communicate life to all who live.

That this action is the most noble cannot be denied. Things are only of value as the principle in which they originate is noble, grand, and elevated. Actions committed by a divine principle are *divine actions*; whereas the actions of the creature, however good they may appear, are *human actions*, or at best they are virtuous actions, if they are done with the help of grace.

Jesus says that He has life in Himself; all other beings have but a borrowed life, but the Word has life in Himself; and as He is communicative, He

desires to communicate this life to men. We must then give place to this life, that it may flow in us, which can only be done by evacuation, and the loss of the life of Adam and of our own action, as St Paul assures us : "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold all things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). This can only be brought about by the death of ourselves and of our own action, that the action of God may be substituted for it. We do not profess, then, to be without action, but only to act in dependence upon the Spirit of God, suffering His action to take the place of our own. Jesus shows us this in the gospel. Martha did good things, but because she did them of her own spirit, Christ reproved her for them. The spirit of man is turbulent and boisterous ; therefore it does little, though it appears to do much. "Martha, Martha," said Jesus, "thou art careful and troubled about many things ; but one thing is needful ; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke x. 41, 42).

What had she chosen, this Magdalene? Peace,

tranquillity, and repose. She apparently ceased to act, that she might be moved by the Spirit of God ; she ceased to live, that Christ might live in her.

This is why it is so necessary to renounce ourselves and all our own works to follow Jesus ; for we cannot follow Him unless we are animated with His Spirit. In order that the Spirit of Christ may dwell in us, our own spirit must give place to Him. "He that is joined to the Lord," says St Paul, "is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). "It is good for me to draw near to God : I have put my trust in the Lord God" (Ps. lxxiii. 28). What is this "drawing near" ? It is the beginning of union.

Union has its beginning, its continuation, its completion, and its consummation. The commencement of union is an inclination towards God. When the soul is converted in the manner I have described, it has an inclination to its centre, and a strong tendency to union : this tendency is the commencement. Then it adheres, which happens when it approaches nearer to God ; then it is united to Him, and finally becomes one with Him—that is, it becomes one spirit with Him ; and it is then that

this spirit, which proceeded from God, returns to Him as its end.

It is, then, necessary that we should enter this way, which is the divine motion, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. St Paul says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). To be Christ's, then, we must suffer ourselves to be filled with His Spirit, and emptied of our own: our hearts must be evacuated. St Paul, in the same place, proves to us the necessity of this divine motion: he says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14).

The divinely-imparted Spirit is the Spirit of divine sonship; therefore, the same apostle continues, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). This spirit is no other than the Spirit of Christ, by whom we participate in His Sonship; and this "Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God."

As soon as the soul leaves itself to be moved by

the Spirit of God, it experiences the witness of this divine sonship ; and this witness serves the more to increase its joy, as it makes it know *that it is called to the liberty of the sons of God*, and that the spirit it has received is not a spirit of bondage, but of liberty.

The Spirit of the divine motion is so necessary for all things, that Paul finds this necessity upon our ignorance of the things that we ask for. "The Spirit," he says, "helpeth our infirmities ; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought ; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." This is conclusive : if we do not know what to pray for, nor how to ask as we ought for what is necessary for us, and if it is needful that the Spirit who is in us, to whose motion we abandon ourselves, should ask it for us, ought we not to leave Him to do it? He does it "with groanings which cannot be uttered."

This Spirit is the Spirit of the Word, who is always heard, as He says Himself: "I know that Thou hearest me always" (John xi. 42). If we leave it to the Spirit within us to ask and to pray, we shall always be answered. Why so? O great apostle, mystic

teacher, so deeply taught in the inner life ! teach us why. "It is," he adds, "because He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God ;" that is to say, this Spirit only asks that which it is God's will to give. It is God's will that we should be saved and that we should be perfect. He asks, then, for all that is necessary to our perfection. Why, after this, should we be burdened with superfluous cares, and be wearied in the greatness of our way, without ever saying, There is no hope in ourselves, and therefore resting in God? God Himself invites us to cast all our care upon Him, and He complains, in inconceivable goodness, that we employ our strength, our riches, and our treasure, in countless exterior things, although there is so little joy to be found in them all. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isa. lv. 2).

Oh, if it were known what happiness there is in thus hearkening unto God, and how the soul is

strengthened by it! All flesh must be silent before the Lord (see Zech. ii. 13). All self-effort must cease when He appears. In order still further to induce us to abandon ourselves to Him without reserve, God assures us that we need fear nothing from such abandonment, because He has a special individual care over each of us. He says, "Can a woman forget her sucking-child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isa. xlix. 15). Ah, words full of consolation! Who on hearing them can fear to abandon himself utterly to the guidance of God?

CHAPTER XVII.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR ACTIONS—
THOSE OF THE SOUL IN THIS CONDITION ARE INTERIOR, BUT HABITUAL, CONTINUED, DIRECT, PROFOUND, SIMPLE, AND IMPERCEPTIBLE — BEING A CONTINUAL SINKING IN THE OCEAN OF DIVINITY—SIMILITUDE OF A VESSEL—HOW TO ACT IN THE ABSENCE OF SENSIBLE SUPPORTS.

THE actions of men are either exterior or interior. The *exterior* are those which appear outwardly, and have a sensible object, possessing neither good nor evil qualities, excepting as they receive them from the interior principle in which they originate. It is not of these that I intend to speak, but only of interior actions, which are those actions of the soul by which it *applies itself* inwardly to some object, or *turns away* from some other.

When, being applied to God, I desire to commit an action of a different nature from those which He

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would prompt, I turn away from God, and I turn towards created things more or less according to the strength or weakness of my action. If, being turned towards the creature, I wish to return to God, I must commit the action of turning away from the creature, and turning towards God ; and thus the more perfect is this action, the more complete will be the conversion.

Until I am perfectly converted, I need several actions to turn me towards God. Some are done all at once, others gradually ; but my action ought to lead me to turn to God, employing all the strength of my soul for Him, as it is written, "Therefore even now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart" (Joel ii. 12). "Thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. xxx. 2). God only asks for our heart: "My son, give me thy heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Prov. xxiii. 26). To give the heart to God is to have its gaze, its strength, and its vigour all centred in Him, to follow His will. We must, then, after we have applied to God, remain always turned towards Him.

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But as the mind of man is weak, and the soul, being accustomed to turn towards earthly things, is easily turned away from God, it must, as soon as it perceives that it is turned towards outward things, resume its former position in God by a simple act of return to Him.

And as several repeated acts form a habit, the soul contracts a habit of conversion, and from action it passes to a habitual condition.

The soul, then, must not seek by means of any efforts or works of its own to come near to God ; this is seeking to perform one action by means of others, instead of by a simple action remaining attached to God alone.

If we believe that we must commit no actions, we are mistaken, for *we are always acting* ; but each one must act according to his degree.

I will endeavour to make this point clear, as, for want of understanding it, it presents a difficulty to many Christians.

There are *passing* and *distinct* actions, and *continued* actions ; *direct* acts and *reflected* acts. All cannot perform the first, and all are not in a condition to

perform the others. The first actions should be committed by those who are turned away from God. They ought to turn to Him by a distinct action, more or less strong according to their distance from Him.

By a *continued* action I understand that by which the soul is completely turned towards its God by a *direct* action, which it does not renew, unless it has been interrupted, but which exists. The soul being altogether turned in this way, is in love, and remains there : "And he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God" (1 John iv. 16). Then the soul may be said to be in a habitual act, resting even in this action. But its rest is not idle, for it has an action *always in force*, viz., a *gentle sinking in God*, in which God attracts it more and more strongly ; and, following this attraction, and resting in love, it sinks more and more in this love, and has an action infinitely stronger, more vigorous, and more prompt, than that action which forms only the return. Now the soul which is in this *profound and strong action*, being turned towards its God, does not perceive this action, because it is direct, and not reflex ; so that persons in this con-

dition, not knowing how rightly to describe it, say that *they have no action*. But they are mistaken; they were never more active. It would be better to say they do not distinguish any action, than that they do not commit any.

The soul does not act of itself, I admit; but it is drawn, and it follows the attracting power. Love is the weight which sinks it, as a person who falls in the sea sinks, and would sink to infinity if the sea were infinite; and without perceiving its sinking, it would sink to the most profound depths with an incredible speed. It is, then, incorrect to say that no actions are committed. All commit actions, but all do not commit them in the same manner; and the abuse arises from the fact, that those who know that action is inevitable wish it to be *distinct* and *sensible*. But sensible action is for beginners, and the other for those more advanced. To stop with the first would be to deprive ourselves of the last; and to wish to commit the last before having passed the first would be an equal abuse.

Everything must be done in its season; each

state has its commencement, its progress, and its end. There is no act which has not its beginning. At first we must work with *effort*, but afterwards we enjoy the fruit of our labour.

When a vessel is in the harbour, the sailors have a difficulty in bringing it into the open sea ; but once there, they easily turn it in the direction in which they wish to navigate. So, when the soul is in sin, it needs an effort to drag it out ; the cords which bind it must be loosened ; then, by means of strong and vigorous action, it must be drawn within itself, little by little leaving the harbour, and being turned within, which is the place to which its voyage should be directed.

When the vessel is thus turned, in proportion as it advances in the sea, it leaves the land behind it, and the further it goes from the land, the less effort is needed to carry it along. At last it begins to sail gently, and the vessel goes on so rapidly that the oars become useless. What does the pilot do then ? He is contented with spreading the sails and sitting at the helm.

Spreading the sails is simply laying ourselves

before God, to be moved by His Spirit. *Sitting at the helm* is preventing our heart from leaving the right way, rowing it gently, and leading it according to the movement of the Spirit of God, who gradually takes possession of it, as the wind gradually fills the sails, and impels the vessel forward. So long as the vessel sails before the wind, the mariners rest from their labour. They voyage farther in an hour, while they rest in this manner and leave the ship to be carried along by the wind, than they would in a much longer time by their own efforts; and if they wished to row, besides the fatigue which would result from it, their labour would be useless, and would only serve to retard the vessel.

This is the conduct we should pursue in our inner life, and in acting thus we shall advance more in a short time by the Divine guidance, than we ever could do by our own efforts. If only you will try this way, you will find it the easiest possible.

When the wind is contrary, if the wind and the tempest are violent, the anchor must be thrown in the sea to stop the vessel. This *anchor* is trust in

God and hope in His goodness, waiting in patience for the tempest to cease, and for a favourable wind to return, as David did : " I waited patiently for the Lord," he says, " and He inclined unto me " (Ps. xl. 1).

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DRYNESS OF PREACHERS, AND THE VARIOUS EVILS WHICH ARISE FROM THEIR FAILING TO TEACH HEART-PRAYER—EXHORTATION TO PASTORS TO LEAD PEOPLE TOWARDS THIS FORM OF PRAYER, WITHOUT AMUSING THEM WITH STUDIED AND METHODOICAL DEVOTION.

IF all those who are working for the conquest of souls sought to win them *by the heart*, leading them first of all to prayer and to the inner life, they would see many and lasting conversions. But so long as they only address themselves to the outside, and instead of drawing people to Christ by occupying their hearts with Him, they only give them a thousand precepts for outward observances, they will see but little fruit, and that will not be lasting.

When once the heart is won, other defects are easily corrected. This is why God particularly asks for the *heart*. By this means alone would be

prevented the drunkenness, blasphemy, lewdness, enmity, and robbery which are prevalent in the world. Jesus Christ would reign universally, and the Church everywhere would be revived.

Error only takes possession of the soul in the absence of faith and prayer. If men could be taught to *believe simply* and to *pray*, instead of disputing amongst themselves, they would be gently led to Christ.

Oh, how inestimable is the loss of those who neglect the inner life! Oh, what an account will they have to render to God who have the charge of souls, for not having discovered this hidden treasure to all those whom they serve in the ministry of the Word!

The excuse given is that there is *danger* in this way, or that ignorant people are incapable of spiritual things. The oracle of truth assures us that God has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them to babes. And what danger can there be in walking in the only true way, which is Jesus Christ, in giving ourselves to Him, looking to Him continually,

putting all our trust in His grace, and tending, with all the forces of our souls, to His pure love ?

Far from the simple ones being *incapable* of this perfection, they are the most suitable for it, because they are more docile, more humble, and more innocent ; and as they do not reason, they are not so attached to their own light. Having no science, they more readily suffer themselves to be guided by the Spirit of God : while others who are blind in their own sufficiency resist the divine inspiration.

God tells us, too, that it is to the *simple* He gives understanding by the entrance of His Word (Ps. cxix. 130). "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the *simple*" (Ps. xix. 7). "The Lord preserveth the *simple* : I was brought low, and He helped me" (Ps. cxvi. 6).

O ye who have the oversight of souls ! see that you do not prevent the little ones from going to Christ. His words to His disciples were, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Luke

xviii. 16). Jesus only said this to His disciples, because they wished to keep the children away from Him. Often the remedy is applied to the body, when the disease is at the *heart*. The reason why we have so little success in seeking to reform men, is that we direct our efforts to the outside, and all that we can do there soon passes off. But if we were to give them first *the key of the interior*, the outside would be reformed at once with a natural facility.

And this is very easy. To teach them to seek God in their heart, to think of Him, to return to Him when they find they have turned away, to do all and suffer all for the sake of pleasing Him—this is to direct them to the source of all grace, and to make them find there all that is necessary for their sanctification. O you who serve souls! I conjure you to put them first of all into this way, which is Jesus Christ; and it is He who conjures you to do this by the blood He has shed for the souls He confides to your care. “Speak to the heart of Jerusalem” (Isa. xl. 2, marg.) O dispensers of His grace, preachers of His Word,

ministers of sacraments! establish His kingdom; and, in order to establish it truly, make it reign over HEARTS. For as it is the heart alone which can oppose His empire, it is by the subjection of the heart that His sovereignty is most honoured. Alas! we seek to make *studied* prayers; and by wishing to arrange them too much, we render them impossible. We have alienated children from the best of Fathers, in seeking to teach them a polished language. Go, poor children, and speak to your Heavenly Father in your natural language: however uncultivated it may be, it is not so to Him. A father loves best the speech which is put in disorder by love and respect, because he sees that it comes from the heart: it is more to him than a dry harangue, vain and unfruitful though well studied. Oh, how certain glances of love charm and ravish Him! They express infinitely more than all language and reason. By wishing to teach how to love LOVE Himself with method, much of this love has been lost. Oh! it is not necessary to teach the art of loving. The language of love is barbarous to him who does not

love; and we cannot learn to love God better than by loving Him. The Spirit of God does not need our arrangements; He takes shepherds at His pleasure to make them prophets; and, far from closing the palace of prayer to any, as it is imagined, He leaves the doors open to all, and Wisdom is ordered to cry in the public places, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Prov. ix. 4, 5). Did not Christ thank His Father that He had hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them to babes? (Matt. xi. 25.)

CHAPTER XIX.

AFTER THE PRECEDING WAYS, THERE REMAINS AN AFTER WAY, PREPARATORY TO DIVINE UNION, IN WHICH WISDOM AND JUSTICE MAKE THE PASSIVE PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL, ALL WHICH IS TREATED IN DETAIL IN THE FOLLOWING TREATISE, ENTITLED "SPIRITUAL TORRENTS."

IT is impossible to attain divine union by the way of meditation alone, or even by the affections, or by any luminous or understood prayer. There are several reasons. These are the principal.

First, according to Scripture, "No man shall see God and live" (Exod. xxxiii. 20). Now all discursive exercises of prayer, or even of *active contemplation*, regarded as an end, and not as a preparation for the *passive*, are exercises of life by which we cannot see God, that is, become united to Him. All that is of man, and of his own industry, however noble and elevated it may be, must die.

St John tells us that "there was silence in heaven."

Heaven represents the depths and centre of the soul, where all must be in silence when the majesty of God appears. All that belongs to our own efforts, or to ourselves in any way, must be destroyed, because nothing is opposed to God but appropriation, and all the malignity of man is in this appropriation, which is the source of his evil ; so that the more a soul loses its appropriation, the more it becomes pure.

Secondly, in order to unite two things so opposed as the purity of God and the impurity of the creature, the simplicity of God and the multiplicity of the creature, God must operate alone ; for this can never be done by the effort of the creature, since two things cannot be united unless there is some relation or resemblance between them, as an impure metal would never unite with one that was pure and refined.

What does God do then ? He sends before Him His own Wisdom, as fire will be sent upon the earth to consume by its activity all the impurity that is there. Fire consumes all things, and nothing resists its activity. It is the same with Wisdom ; it consumes all impurity in the creature, to prepare him for divine union.

This impurity, so opposed to union, is appropriation and activity. *Appropriation*, because it is the source of the real impurity which can never be united to essential purity; as the sun's rays may touch the mud but cannot unite with it. *Activity*, because God being in an infinite repose, in order that the soul may be united to Him, it must participate in His repose, without which there can be no union, because of the dissemblance; and to unite two things, they must be in a proportionate rest.

It is for this reason that the soul can only attain divine union by the rest of its will; and it can only be united to God when it is in a *central rest* and in the purity of its creation.

To purify the soul God makes use of wisdom as fire is used for the purification of gold. It is certain that gold can only be purified by fire, which gradually consumes all that is earthly and foreign, and separates it from the gold. It is not sufficient that the earth should be changed into gold; it is necessary that the fire should melt and dissolve it, to remove from it all that is earthly; and this gold is put in the fire so many times that it loses its impurity, and all necessity

of purification. Then it is fit to be employed in the most excellent workmanship.

And if this gold is impure in the end, it is because it has contracted fresh defilement by coming in contact with other bodies. But this impurity is only superficial, and does not prevent its being used ; whereas its former impurity was hidden within it, and, as it were, identified with its nature.

In addition to this, you will remark that gold of an inferior degree of purity cannot mix with that of a superior purity. The one must contract the impurity of the other, or else impart its own purity to it. Put a refined gold with an unrefined one, what can the goldsmith ever do with it? He will have all the impurity taken from the second piece, that it may be able to mix with the first. This is what St Paul tells us, that "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is ;" he adds, that if any man's work should be found to deserve burning, he should be saved "so as by fire" (1 Cor. iii. 13, 15). That means, that though there are some works which are good, and which God receives, yet, so that he who has done them may be pure, they too must pass through the fire, in order that all

appropriation, that is, all that was his own, may be taken from them. God will judge our righteousness, because "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified," but by "the righteousness of God, which is by faith" (Rom. iii. 20, 22).

This being understood, I say that, in order that man may be united to his God, wisdom and divine justice, like a pitiless and devouring fire, must take from him all appropriation, all that is terrestrial, carnal, and of his own activity; and having taken all this from him, they must unite him to God.

This is never brought about by the labours of the creature; on the contrary, it even causes him regret, because, as I have said, man so loves what is his own, and is so fearful of its destruction, that if God did not accomplish it Himself, and by His own authority, man would never consent to it.

It will be objected to this, that God never deprives man of his liberty, and that therefore he can always resist God; for which reason I ought not to say that *God acts absolutely, without the consent of man*. In explanation I say, that it is suffi-

cient that man should give a *passive consent*, that he may have entire and full liberty ; because having at the beginning given himself to God, that He may do as He will both with him and in him, he gave from that time an *active* and general assent to all that God might do. But when God destroys, burns, and purifies, the soul does not see that all this is for its advantage ; it rather believes the contrary : and as at first the fire seems to tarnish the gold, so this operation seems to despoil the soul of its purity. So that if an *active* and *explicit* consent were required, the soul would find a difficulty in giving it, and often would not give it. All that it does is to remain in a passive contentment, enduring this operation as well as it can, being neither able nor willing to prevent it.

God then so purifies this soul of all natural, distinct, and perceived operations, that at last He makes it more and more *conformed* to Himself, and then *uniform*, raising the passive capacity of the creature, enlarging it and ennobling it, though in a hidden and unperceived manner, which is termed mystical. But in all these operations the soul must concur passively,

and in proportion as the working of God becomes stronger, the soul must continually yield to Him, until He absorbs it altogether. We do not say, then, as some assert, that there must be no *action*; since, on the contrary, this is *the door*; but only that *we must not remain in it*, seeing that man should tend towards the perfection of his end, and that he can never reach it without quitting the first means, which, though they were necessary to introduce him into the way, would greatly hinder him afterwards, if he attached himself obstinately to them. This is what Paul said, "I forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before; I press toward the mark" (Phil. iii. 13, 14).

Should we not consider a person destitute of reason who, after undertaking a journey, stopped at the first inn, because he was assured that several had passed it, that a few had lodged there, and that the landlord lived there? What the soul is required to do, then, is *to advance towards its end*, to take the shortest road, not to stop at the first point, and, following the advice of St Paul, to suffer itself to be "led by the Spirit of God" (Rom. viii. 14), who will

lead it to the end for which it was created, which is the enjoyment of God.

It is well known that the sovereign good is God ; that essential blessedness consists in union with God, and that this union cannot be the result of our own efforts, since God only communicates Himself to the soul according to its capacity. We cannot be united to God without passivity and simplicity ; and this union being bliss, the way which leads to it must be the best, and there can be no risk in walking in it.

This way is not *dangerous*. If it were, Christ would not have represented it as the most perfect and necessary of all ways. All can walk in it ; and as all are called to blessedness, all are called to the enjoyment of God, both in this life and in that which is to come, since the enjoyment of God is blessedness. I say the enjoyment of God Himself, not of His gifts, which can never impart essential blessedness, not being able fully to satisfy the soul, which is so constituted that even the richest gifts of God cannot thoroughly content it. The desire of God is to give Himself to us, according to the capacity with which He has endowed us ; and yet we fear

to leave ourselves to God ! We fear to possess Him, and to be prepared for divine union !

You say, *we must not bring ourselves to this condition.* I agree to that ; but I say too, that no one ever could bring himself to it, since no man could ever unite himself to God by his own efforts, and God Himself must do the work.

You say that some pretend to have attained it. I say that this state cannot be feigned, any more than a man dying of hunger can for any length of time pretend to be satisfied. It will soon be known whether or no men have attained this end.

Since, then, none can arrive at the end unless he be brought there, it is not a question of introducing people to it, but of showing them the way which leads to it, and begging them not to rest in those practices which must be relinquished at God's command.

Would it not be cruelty to show a fountain to a thirsty man, and then hold him bound, and prevent his going to it, leaving him to die of thirst ? That is what is being done now. Let us all be agreed both as to the way and the end. The way has its com-

mencement, its progress, and its terminus. The more we advance towards the terminus, the farther we go from the commencement; and it is impossible to reach the terminus but by constantly going farther from the starting-point, being unable to go from one place to another without passing through all that comes between them: this is incontestable.

Oh, how blind are the majority of men, who pride themselves upon their learning and talent!

O Lord! how true it is that Thou hast hidden Thy secrets from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes!



SPIRITUAL TORRENTS.

BY

MADAME J. M. B. DE LA MOTHE-GUYON.

“Let judgment run down as waters ; and righteousness
as a mighty stream.”—AMOS v. 24.



SPIRITUAL TORRENTS.


PART I.

CHAPTER I.

SOULS UNDER DIVINE INFLUENCE ARE IMPELLED TO SEEK AFTER GOD, BUT IN DIFFERENT WAYS—REDUCED TO THREE, AND EXPLAINED BY A SIMILITUDE.

AS soon as a soul is brought under divine influence, and its return to God is true and sincere, after the first cleansing which confession and contrition have effected, God imparts to it a certain instinct to return to Him in a most complete manner, and to become united to Him. The soul feels then that it was not created for the amusements and trifles of the world, but that it has a centre and an end, to which it must be its aim to return,

and out of which it can never find true repose. This instinct is very deeply implanted in the soul, more or less in different cases, according to the designs of God ; but all have a loving impatience to purify themselves, and to adopt the necessary ways and means of returning to their source and origin, like rivers, which, after leaving their source, flow on continuously, in order to precipitate themselves into the sea. You will observe that some rivers move gravely and slowly, and others with greater velocity ; but there are rivers and *torrents* which rush with frightful impetuosity, and which nothing can arrest. All the burdens which might be laid upon them, and the obstructions which might be placed to impede their course, would only serve to redouble their violence. It is thus with souls. Some go on quietly towards perfection, and never reach the sea, or only very late, contented to lose themselves in some stronger and more rapid river, which carries them with itself into the sea. Others, which form the second class, flow on more vigorously and promptly than the first. They even carry with them a number of rivulets ; but they are slow



and idle in comparison with the last class, which rush onward with so much impetuosity, that they are utterly useless : they are not available for navigation, nor can any merchandise be trusted upon them, except at certain parts and at certain times. These are bold and mad rivers, which dash against the rocks, which terrify by their noise, and which stop at nothing. The second class are more agreeable and more useful ; their gravity is pleasing, they are all laden with merchandise, and we sail upon them without fear or peril.

Let us look, with divine aid, at these three classes of persons, under the three figures that I have proposed ; and we will commence with the first, in order to conclude happily with the last.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE FIRST WAY, WHICH IS ACTIVE, AND OF MEDITATION—WHAT IT IS—ITS WEAKNESSES, HABITS, OCCUPATIONS, ADVANTAGES, ETC.—GENERAL OPINION—WANT OF OBSERVATION THE CAUSE OF MOST OF THE DISPUTES AND DIFFICULTIES WHICH HAVE ARISEN UPON THE PASSIVE WAY, AND THE ABSURD OBJECTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE TO IT—SOULS FOR MEDITATION—THEY SHOULD BE LED TO IT THROUGH THE AFFECTIONS—OPINION CONCERNING THEIR BARRENNESS AND POWERLESSNESS—SPIRITUAL BOOKS AND AUTHORS ON THE INNER LIFE, IN CONTRAST TO OTHERS—CAPACITY AND INCAPACITY OF SOULS—THE SIMPLE ARE BETTER THAN THE GREAT REASONERS.

THE first class of souls are those who, after their conversion, give themselves up to meditation, or even to works of charity. They perform some exterior austerities ; endeavour, little by little, to purify themselves, to rid themselves of certain notable sins, and even of voluntary venial ones. They endeavour, with all their little strength, to advance gradually, but it is feebly and slowly.

As their source is not abundant, the dryness

sometimes causes delay. There are even periods, in times of aridity, when they dry up altogether. They do not cease to flow from the source, but it is so feebly as to be barely perceptible. These rivers carry little or no merchandise, and, therefore, for the public need, it must be taken to them. It is necessary, at the same time, that art should assist nature, and find the means of enlarging them, either by canals, or by the help of other rivers of the same kind, which are joined together and united to it, which rivers thus joined increase the body of water, and, helping each other, put themselves in a condition to carry a few small boats, not to the sea, but to some of the chief rivers, of which we shall speak later. Such beings have usually little depth of spiritual life. They work outwardly, and rarely quit their meditations, so that they are not fit for great things. In general they carry no merchandise—that is to say, they can impart nothing to others; and God seldom uses them, unless it be to carry a few little boats—that is, to minister to bodily necessities; and in order to be used, they must be discharged into the canals of sensible graces, or

united to some others in religion, by which means several, of medium grace, manage to carry the small boat, but not into the sea itself, which is God : into that they never enter in this life, but only in the next.

It is not that souls are not sanctified in this way. There are many people, who pass for being very virtuous, who never get beyond it, God giving them lights conformed to their condition, which are sometimes very beautiful, and are the admiration of the religious world. The most highly favoured of this class are diligent in the practice of virtue ; they devise thousands of holy inventions and practices to lead them to God, and to enable them to abide in His presence ; but all is accomplished by their own efforts, aided and supported by grace, and their own works appear to exceed the work of God, His work only concurring with theirs.

The spiritual life of this class only thrives in proportion to their work. If this work be removed, the progress of grace within them is arrested : they resemble pumps, which only yield water in proportion as they are agitated. You will observe in them a

great tendency to assist themselves by means of their natural sensibilities, a vigorous activity, a desire to be always doing something more and something new to promote their perfection, and, in their seasons of barrenness, an anxiety to rid themselves of it. They are subject to great variation : sometimes they do wonders, at other times they languish and decline. They have no evenness of conduct, because, as the greater part of their religion is in these natural sensibilities, whenever it happens that their sensibilities are dry, either from want of work on their part, or from a lack of correspondence on the part of God, they fall into discouragement, or else they redouble their efforts, in the hope of recovering of themselves what they have lost. They never possess, like others, a profound peace or calmness in the midst of distractions ; on the contrary, they are always on the alert to struggle against them or to complain of them.

Such minds must not be directed to passive devotion ; this would be to ruin them irrecoverably, taking from them their means of access to God. For as with a person who is compelled to travel, and who

has neither boat nor carriage, nor any other alternative than that of going on foot, if you remove his feet, you place advancement beyond his reach ; so with these souls ; if you take away their works, which are their feet, they can never advance.

And I believe this to be the cause of the contests which now agitate the religious world. Those who are in the *passive* way, conscious of the blessedness they experience in it, would compel all to walk with them ; those, on the contrary, who are in what I have termed the state of *meditation*, would confine all to their way, which would involve inestimable loss.

What must be done then ? We must take the middle course, and see for which of the two ways souls are fitted.

This may be known in some by the opposition they have to remaining at rest, and allowing themselves to be led by the Spirit of God ; by a confusion of faults and defects into which they fall without being conscious of them ; or, if they are possessed of natural prudence, by a certain skill in concealing their faults from others and from themselves ; by their ad-

herence to their sentiments, and by a number of other indications which cannot be explained.

The way to deliver them from such a state would be, to lead them to live less in the intellect and more in the affections, and if it be manifest that they are gradually substituting the one for the other, it is a sign that a spiritual work is being carried on within them.

I am at a loss to understand why so loud a cry is raised against those books and writers that treat of the inner life. I maintain that they can do no harm, unless it be to some who are willing to lose themselves for the sake of their own pleasure, to whom not only these things, but everything else, would be an injury: like spiders, which convert flowers into venom. But they can do no injury to those humble souls who are desirous for perfection, because it is impossible for any to understand them to whom the special light is not accorded; and whatever others may read, they cannot rightly understand those conditions which, being beyond the range of imagination, can be known only by experience. Perfection goes on with a steady advancement corresponding to the progress of the inner life.

Not that there are no persons advanced in sanctification who have faults in appearance even greater than those of others, but they are not the same either as to their nature or their quality.

The second reason why I say that such books can do no harm is, that they demand so much natural death, so much breaking off, so many things to be conquered and destroyed, that no one would ever have strength for the undertaking without sincerity of purpose; or even if any one undertook it, it would only produce the effect of *meditation*, which is to endeavour to destroy itself.

As for those who wish to lead others in their groove, and not in God's, and to place limits to their further advancement—as for those, I say, who know but one way, and would have all the world to walk in it, the evils which they bring upon others are irremediable, for they keep them all their lives stopping at certain things which hinder God from blessing them infinitely.

It seems to me that we must act in the divine life as in a school. The scholars are not kept always in the same class, but are passed on to others more ad-

vanced. O human science ! you are so little worth, and yet with you men do not fail to take every precaution ! O science mysterious and divine ! you are so great and so necessary ; and yet they neglect you, they limit you, they contract you, they do violence to you ! Oh, will there never be a school of religion ! Alas ! by wishing to make it a study, man has marred it. He has sought to give rules and limits to the Spirit of God, who is without limit.

O poor powerless souls ! you are better fitted to answer God's purposes, and, if you are faithful, your devotion will be more pleasing to Him, than that of those great intellects which make prayer a study rather than a devotion. More than this, I say that such souls as these, who appear so powerless and so incapable, are worthy of consideration, provided they only knock at the door, and wait with a humble patience until it be opened to them. Those persons of great intellect and subtle understanding, who cannot remain a moment in silence before God, who make a continual Babel, who are so well able to give an account of their devotion in all its parts, who go through it always according to their own will, and

with the same method, who exercise themselves as they will on any subject which suggests itself to them, who are so well satisfied with themselves and their light, who expatiate upon the preparation and the methods for prayer, will make but little advance in it; and after ten or twenty years of this exercise, will always remain the same.

Alas! when it is a question of loving a miserable creature, do they use a method for that? The most ignorant in such a matter are the most skilful. It is the same, and yet very different, with divine love. Therefore, if one who has never known such religion comes to you to learn it, teach him to love God much, and to let himself go with a perfect abandonment into love, and he will soon know it. If it be a nature slow to love, let him do his best, and wait in patience till love itself make itself beloved in its own way, and not in yours.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE SECOND WAY OF THE RETURN OF THE SOUL TO GOD, WHICH IS THE PASSIVE WAY, BUT ONE OF LIGHT, AND OF TWO KINDS OF INTRODUCTION TO IT—DESCRIPTION OF THIS CLASS, AND OF THEIR STRIKING ADVANTAGES—VARIOUS NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THIS CLASS, THEIR CONDUCT, PERFECTIONS, IMPERFECTIONS, AND EXPERIENCES.


THE second class are like those large rivers which move with a slow and steady course. They flow with pomp and majesty; their course is direct and easily followed; they are charged with merchandise, and can go on to the sea without mingling with other rivers; but they are late in reaching it, being grave and slow. There are even some who never reach it at all, and these, for the most part, lose themselves in other larger rivers, or else turn aside to some arm of the sea. Many of these rivers serve to carry merchandise, and are heavily laden with it. They may be kept back by sluices,

and turned off at certain points. Such are the souls in the *passive way of sight*. Their strength is very abundant ; they are laden with gifts, and graces, and celestial favours ; they are the admiration of their generation and numbers of saints who shine as stars in the Church have never passed this limit. This class is composed of two kinds. The first commenced in the ordinary way, and have afterwards been drawn to passive contemplation. The others have been, as it were, taken by surprise ; they have been seized by the heart, and they feel themselves loving without having learned to know the object of their love. For there is this difference between divine and human love, that the latter supposes a previous acquaintance with its object, because, as it is outside of it, the senses must be taken to it, and the senses can only be taken to it because it is communicated to them : the eyes see and the heart loves. It is not so with divine love. God, having an absolute power over the heart of man, and being its origin and its end, it is not necessary that He should make known to it what He is. He takes it by assault, without giving it battle. The

heart is powerless to resist Him, even though He may not use an absolute and violent authority, unless it be in some cases where He permits it to be so, in order to manifest His power. He takes hearts, then, in this way, making them burn in a moment ; but usually He gives them flashes of light which dazzle them, and lift them nearer to Himself. These persons appear much greater than those of whom I shall speak later, to those who are not possessed of a divine discernment, for they attain outwardly to a high degree of perfection, God eminently elevating their natural capacity, and replenishing it in an extraordinary manner ; and yet they are never really brought to a state of annihilation to self, and God does not usually so draw them out of their own being that they become lost in Himself. Such characters as these are, however, the wonder and admiration of men. God bestows on them gifts upon gifts, graces upon graces, visions, revelations, inward voices, ecstasies, ravishments, &c. It seems as though God's only care was to enrich and beautify them, and to communicate to them His secrets. All joys are theirs.


This does not imply that they bear no heavy crosses, no fierce temptations: these are the shadows which cause their virtues to shine with greater brilliancy; for these temptations are thrust back vigorously, the crosses are borne bravely; they even desire more of them: they are all flame and fire, enthusiasm and love. God uses them to accomplish great things, and it seems as though they only need to desire a thing in order to receive it from God, He finding His delight in satisfying all their desires and doing all their will. Yet in the same path there are various degrees of progression, and some attain a far higher standard of perfection than others; their danger lies in fixing their thoughts upon what God has done for them, thus stopping at the gifts, instead of being led through them to the Giver.

The design of God in the bestowal of His grace, and in the profusion with which He gives it, is to bring them nearer to Himself; but they make use of it for an utterly different end: they rest in it, reflect upon it, look at it, and appropriate it; and hence arise vanity, complaisance, self-esteem, the



preference of themselves to others, and often the destruction of religious life. These people are admirable, in themselves considered ; and sometimes by a special grace they are made very helpful to others, particularly if they have been brought from great depths of sin. But usually they are less fitted to lead others than those who come after ; for being near to God themselves, they have a horror of sin, and often a shrinking from sinners, and never having experienced the miseries they see in others, they are astonished, and unable to render either help or advice. They expect too great perfection, and do not lead on to it little by little, and if they meet with weak ones, they do not aid them in proportion to their own advancement, or in accordance with God's designs, but often even seek to avoid them. They find it difficult to converse with those who have not reached their own level, preferring a solitary life to all the ministry of love. If such persons were heard in conversation by those not divinely enlightened, they would be believed equal to the last class, or even more advanced. They make use of the same terms—of DEATH, LOSS

OF SELF, ANNIHILATION, &c. ; and it is quite true that they do die in their own way, that they are annihilated and lose themselves, for often their natural sensibilities are lost or suspended in their seasons of devotion ; they even lose the habit of making use of them. Thus these souls are passive, but they have light, and love, and strength in themselves ; they like to retain something of their own, it may be even their virtues, but in so delicate a form that only the Divine eye can detect it. Such as these are so laden with merchandise that their course is very slow. What must be done with them, then, to lead them out of this way ? There is a more safe and certain path for them, even that of faith : they need to be led from the sensible to the supernatural, from that which is known and perceived to the very deep, yet very safe, darkness of faith. It is useless to endeavour to ascertain whether these things be of God or not, since they must be surpassed ; for if they are of God, they will be carried on by Him, if only we abandon ourselves to Him ; and if they are not of God, we shall not be deceived by them, if we do not stay at them.



This class of people find far greater difficulty in entering the way of faith than the first, for as what they already possess is so great, and so evidently from God, they will not believe that there is anything higher in the Church of God. Therefore they cling to it.

O God ! how many spiritual possessions there are which appear great virtues to those who are not divinely enlightened, and which appear great and dangerous defects to those who are so ! For those in this way regard as virtues what others look upon as subtle faults ; and even the light to see them in their true colours is not given to them. These people have rules and regulations for their obedience, which are marked by prudence ; they are strong and vigorous, though they appear dead. They are indeed dead as to their own wants, but not as to their foundation. Such souls as these often possess an inner silence, certain sinkings into God, which they distinguish and express well ; but they have not that secret longing to be nothing, like the last class. It is true they desire to be nothing by a certain perceptible annihilation, a deep

humility, an abasement under the immense weight of God's greatness. All this is an annihilation in which they dwell without being annihilated. They have the feeling of annihilation without the reality, for the soul is still sustained by its feelings, and this state is more satisfactory to it than any other, for it gives more assurance. This class usually are only brought into God by death, unless it be some privileged ones, whom God designs to be the lights of His Church, or whom He designs to sanctify more eminently; and such He robs by degrees of all their riches. But as there are few sufficiently courageous to be willing, after so much blessedness, to lose it all, few pass this point, God's intention perhaps being that they should not pass it, and that, as in the Father's house there are many mansions, they should only occupy this one. Let us leave the causes with God.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE THIRD WAY OF RETURN TO GOD, WHICH IS THE PASSIVE WAY OF FAITH, AND OF ITS FIRST DEGREE—DESCRIPTION OF THIS WAY UNDER THE SIMILITUDE OF A TORRENT—PROPENSITY OF THE SOUL TOWARDS GOD—ITS PROPERTIES, OBSTACLES, AND EFFECTS EXPLAINED BY THE SIMILITUDE OF FIRE—WHAT BEFALLS THE SOUL CALLED TO WALK IN THE PASSIVE WAY OF FAITH—DESCRIPTION OF THE FIRST DEGREE OF THIS THIRD WAY, AND OF THE STATE OF THE SOUL IN IT—THE REST IT FINDS IN IT WOULD BE HURTFUL IF GOD DID NOT DRAW IT OUT OF IT, IN ORDER TO FURTHER ITS ADVANCEMENT.

WHAT shall we say of the souls in this *third way*, unless it be that they resemble TORRENTS which rise in high mountains? They have their source in God Himself, and they have not a moment's rest until they are lost in Him. Nothing stops them, and no burdens are laid upon them. They rush on with a rapidity which alarms even the most confident. These torrents flow without order, here and there,

wherever they can find a passage, having neither regular beds nor an orderly course. They sometimes become muddy by passing through ground which is not firm, and which they bear away with them by their rapidity. Sometimes they appear to be irrecoverably lost, then they reappear for a time, but it is only to precipitate themselves in another abyss, still deeper than the former one. It is the sport of these torrents to show themselves, to lose themselves, and to break themselves upon the rocks. Their course is so rapid as to be undiscernible; but finally, after many precipices and abysses, after having been dashed against rocks, and many times lost and found again, they reach the sea, where they are lost to be found no more. And there, however poor, mean, useless, destitute of merchandise the poor torrent may have been, it is wonderfully enriched, for it is not rich with its own riches, like other rivers, which only bear a certain amount of merchandise or certain rarities, but it is rich with the riches of the sea itself. It bears on its bosom the largest vessels; it is the sea which bears them, and yet it is the river, because the river, being lost in the sea, has become one with it.

It is to be remarked, that the river or torrent thus precipitated into the sea does not lose its nature, although it is so changed and lost as not to be recognised. It will always remain what it was, yet its identity is lost, not as to reality, but as to quality; for it so takes the properties of salt water, that it has nothing peculiar to itself, and the more it loses itself and remains in the sea, the more it exchanges its own nature for that of the sea. For what, then, is not this poor torrent fitted? Its capacity is unlimited, since it is the same as that of the sea; it is capable of enriching the whole earth. O happy loss! who can set thee forth? Who can describe the gain which has been made by this useless and good-for-nothing river, despised and looked upon as a mad thing, on which the smallest boat could not be trusted, because, not being able to restrain itself, it would have dragged the boat with it. What do you say of the fate of this torrent, O great rivers! which flow with such majesty, which are the delight and admiration of the world, and glory in the quantity of merchandise spread out upon you? The fate of this poor torrent, which you regard with contempt, or at best with compassion,

what has it become? What use can it serve now, or rather, what use can it not serve? What does it lack? You are now its servants, since the riches which you possess are only the overflow of its abundance, or a fresh supply which you are carrying to it.

But before speaking of the happiness of a soul thus lost in God, we must begin with its origin and go on by degrees.

The soul, as we have said, having proceeded from God, has a continual propensity to return to Him, because, as He is its origin, He is also its final end. Its course would be interminable if it were not arrested or interrupted by sin and unbelief. Therefore the heart of man is perpetually in motion, and can find no rest till it returns to its origin and its centre, which is God: like fire, which, being removed from its sphere, is in continual agitation, and does not rest till it has returned to it, and then, by a miracle of nature, this element, so active itself as to consume everything by its activity, is at perfect rest. O poor soul who are seeking happiness in this life! you will never find it out of God. Seek to return to Him:

there all your longings and troubles, your agitations and anxieties, will be reduced to perfect rest.

It is to be remarked, that in proportion as fire approaches its centre, it always approaches rest, although its swiftness increases. It is the same with the soul: as soon as sin ceases to hold it back, it seeks indefatigably to find God; and if it were not for sin, nothing could impede its course, which would be so speedy, that it would soon attain its end. But it is also true that, in proportion as it approaches God, its speed is augmented, and at the same time becomes more peaceful; for the rest, or rather the peace, since it is not at rest, but is pursuing a peaceful course, increases so that its peace redoubles its speed, and its speed increases its peace.

The hindrances, then, arise from sins and imperfections, which arrest for a time the course of the soul, more or less, according to the magnitude of the fault. Then the soul is conscious of its activity, as though when fire was going on towards its centre, it encountered obstacles, such as pieces of wood or straw: it would resume its former activity in order to consume these obstacles or barriers, and the greater the ob-

stacle the more its activity would increase. If it were a piece of wood, a longer and stronger activity would be needed to consume it ; but if it were only a straw, it would be burned up in a moment, and would but very slightly impede its course. You will notice that the obstacles which the fire would encounter would only impart to it a fresh stimulus to surmount all which prevented its union with its centre ; again, it is to be remarked, that the more obstacles the fire might encounter, and the more considerable they might be, the more they would retard its course ; and if it were continually meeting with fresh ones, it would be kept back, and prevented from returning whence it came. We know by experience, that if we continually add fuel to fire, we shall keep it down, and prevent its rising. It is the same with the souls of men. Their instincts and natural propensities lead them towards God. They would advance incessantly, were it not for the hindrances they meet. These hindrances are sins and imperfections, which prove the greater obstacles in the way of their return to God, according as they are serious and lasting ; so that if they continue in sin,

they will never reach their end. Those, therefore, who have not sinned so grossly as others, should advance much more rapidly. This usually is the case, and yet it seems as though God took pleasure in making "grace abound where sin has most abounded" (Rom. v. 20). I believe that one of the reasons of this, to be found in those who have not grossly sinned, is their estimation of their own righteousness, and this is an obstacle more difficult to surmount than even the grossest sins, because we cannot have so great an attachment to sins which are so hideous in themselves, as we have to our own righteousness; and God, who will not do violence to liberty, leaves such hearts to enjoy their holiness at their own pleasure, while He finds His delight in purifying the most miserable. And in order to accomplish His purpose, He sends a stronger and fiercer fire, which consumes those gross sins more easily than a slower fire consumes smaller obstacles. It even seems as though God loved to set up His throne in these criminal hearts, in order to manifest His power, and to show how He can restore the disfigured soul to its original condition, and even make

it more beautiful than it was before it fell. Those then who have greatly sinned, and for whom I now write, are conscious of a great fire consuming all their sins and hindrances; they often find their course impeded by besetting sins, but this fire consumes them again and again, till they are completely subdued. And as the fire thus goes on consuming, the obstacles are more and more easily surmounted, so that at last they are no more than straws, which, far from impeding its course, only make it burn the more fiercely.

Let us then take the soul in its original condition, and follow it through its various stages, if God, who inspires these thoughts, which only occur to me as I write, wills that we should do so.

As God's design for the soul is that it should be lost in Himself, in a manner unknown to ordinary Christians, He begins His work by imparting to it a sense of its distance from Him. As soon as it has perceived and felt this distance, the natural inclination which it has to return to its source, and which has been, as it were, deadened by sin, is revived. Then the soul experiences true sorrow for sin, and is painfully conscious of the evil which is caused by this

separation from God. This sentiment thus implanted in the soul leads it to seek the means of ridding itself of this trouble, and of entering into a certain rest which it sees from afar, but which only redoubles its anxiety, and increases its desire to pursue it until it finds it.

Some of those who are thus exercised, having never been taught that they must seek to have God within them, and not expect to find Him in outward righteousness, give themselves up to meditation, and seek without what can only be found within. This meditation, in which they seldom succeed, because God, who has better things in store for them, does not permit them to find any rest in such an experience, only serves to increase their longing ; for their wound is at the heart, and they apply the plaster externally, which does but foster the disease, instead of healing it. They struggle a long time with this exercise, and their struggling does but increase their powerlessness ; and unless God, who Himself assumes the charge of them, sends some messenger to show them a different way, they will lose their time, and will lose it just so long as they remain unaided. But God, who is

abundant in goodness, does not fail to send them help, though it may be but passing and temporary. As soon, then, as they are taught that they cannot advance because their wound is an internal one, and they are seeking to heal it by external applications ; when they are led to seek in the depths of their own hearts what they have sought in vain out of themselves ; then they find, with an astonishment which overwhelms them, that they have within them a treasure which they have been seeking far off. Then they rejoice in their new liberty ; they marvel that prayer is no longer a burden, and that the more they retire within themselves, the more they taste of a certain mysterious something which ravishes them and carries them away, and they would wish ever to love thus, and thus to be buried within themselves. Yet what they experience, delightful as it may appear, does not stop them, if they are to be led into pure faith, but leads them to follow after something more, which they have not yet known. They are now all ardour and love. They seem already to be in Paradise ; for what they possess within themselves is infinitely sweeter than all the joys of earth : these

they can leave without pain ; they would leave the whole world to enjoy for one hour their present experience. They find that prayer has become their continual attitude ; their love increases day by day, so that their one desire is always to love and never to be interrupted. And as they are not now strong enough to be undisturbed by conversation, they shun and fear it ; they love to be alone, and to enjoy the caresses of their Beloved. They have within themselves a Counsellor, who lets them find no pleasure in earthly things, and who does not suffer them to commit a single fault, without making them feel by His coldness how much sin is displeasing to Him. This coldness of God, in times of transgression, is to them the most terrible chastisement. It seems as though God's only care were to correct and reprove them, and His one purpose to perfect them. It is a surprise to themselves and to others that they change more in a month by this way, and even in a day, than in several years by the other. O God ! it belongs only to Thee to correct and to purify the hearts of Thy children !

God has yet another means of chastising the soul, when it is further advanced in the divine life, by

making Himself more fully known to it after it falls ; then the poor soul is covered with confusion ; it would rather bear the most severe chastisement than this goodness of God after it has sinned.

These persons are now so full of their own feelings that they want to impart them to others ; they long to teach the whole world to love God ; their sentiments towards Him are so deep, so pure, and so disinterested, that those who hear them speak, if they are not divinely enlightened, believe them to have attained the height of perfection. They are fruitful in good works ; there is no reasoning here, nothing but a deep and burning love. The soul feels itself seized and held fast by a divine force which ravishes and consumes it. It is like intoxicated persons, who are so possessed with wine that they do not know what they are doing, and are no longer masters of themselves. If such as these try to read, the book falls from their hands, and a single line suffices them ; they can hardly get through a page in a whole day, however assiduously they may devote themselves to it, for a single word from God awakens that secret instinct which animates and fires them, so that love

closes both their mouth and their eyes. They cannot utter verbal prayers, being unable to pronounce them. A heart which is unaccustomed to this does not know what it means ; for it has never experienced anything like it before, and it does not understand why it cannot pray, and yet it cannot resist the power which overcomes it. It cannot be troubled, nor be fearful of doing wrong, for He who holds it bound does not permit it either to doubt that it is He who thus holds it, or to strive against it, for if it makes an effort to pray, it feels that He who possesses it closes its lips, and compels it, by a sweet and loving violence, to be silent. Not that the creature cannot resist and speak by an effort, but besides doing violence to himself he loses this divine peace, and feels that he is becoming dry : he must allow himself to be moved upon by God at His will, and not in his own way. The soul in this state imagines itself to be in an inward silence, because its working is so gentle, so easy, and so quiet that it does not perceive it. It believes itself to have reached the summit of perfection, and it sees nothing before it but enjoyment of the wealth it possesses.

These Christians, so ardent and so desirous after

God, begin to rest in their condition, and gradually and insensibly to lose the loving activity in seeking after God which formerly characterised them, being satisfied with their joy which they substituted for God Himself; and this rest would be to them an irreparable loss, if God, in His infinite goodness, did not draw them out of this state to lead them into one more advanced. But before speaking of it, let us look at the imperfections of this stage.

CHAPTER V.

IMPERFECTIONS, INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR, OF THIS FIRST DEGREE—MISTAKES THAT ARE MADE IN IT—ITS PASSIVITY—SPIRITUAL DRYNESS, MINGLED WITH A TENDER BUT SELF-INTERESTED LOVE, WHICH NEEDS THE EXPERIENCE AND PURIFICATIONS OF THE FOLLOWING DEGREE.

THE soul in the degree of which I have just spoken can and does make great advances, going from love to love, and from cross to cross ; but it falls so frequently, and is so selfish, that it may be said to move only at a snail's pace, although it appears to itself and to others to progress infinitely. The torrent is now in a flat country, and has not yet found the slope of the mountain down which it may precipitate itself, and take a course which is never to be stopped.

The faults of those in this degree are a certain self-esteem, more hidden and deeply rooted than it was

before they had received these graces and favours from God ; a certain secret contempt for others whom they see so far behind themselves, and a certain hardness for sin and sinners ; a zeal of St John before the descent of the Holy Ghost, when he wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans to consume them ; a certain confidence in their own safety and virtue ; a secret pride, which causes them to grieve specially over the faults which they commit in public : they appropriate the gifts of God, and treat them as though they were their own : they forget weakness and poverty in the strength which they possess ; so that they lose all self-distrust. Though all this and much more is to be found in persons in this degree, they are themselves unconscious of it ; but these faults will make themselves known in time. The grace which they feel so strongly in themselves being an assurance to them that they have nothing to fear, they allow themselves to speak without being divinely commissioned. They are anxious to communicate what they feel to every one else. It is true that they are of use to others, for their burning words take hold of the hearts of those who hear them ; but

apart from the fact that they cannot do the good they would do, if God would have them impart to others what they have received, they are giving out of their necessity and not of their abundance ; so that they exhaust themselves ; as you have seen several pools of water under a fountain. The fountain alone gives out of its abundance, and the pools only send into each other of the fulness which is communicated to them ; but if the fountain be closed or turned aside, and the pools cease to overflow, then as they are cut off from the source, they dry up. This is precisely what happens to those in this degree. They want to be constantly sending out their waters, and it is not till late that they perceive that the water which they had was only for themselves, and that they are not in a state to communicate it, because they are not connected with the source. They are like bottles of scent which are left open : they find so much sweetness in the odour which they emit that they do not perceive the loss they themselves sustain. Yet they appear to practise virtue without any effort, since they are occupied only with a general love, without reason or motive. If you ask them what they do during

the day, they will tell you that they love ; but if you ask why they love, they will tell you that they do not know ; they only know that they love, and that they burn with desire to suffer for the object of their love. You may ask if it is not the sight of the sufferings of their Beloved which inspires them with the longing to suffer with Him, but they will reply that the thought of His sufferings did not even enter their mind. Neither is it the desire to imitate the virtues which they see in Him, for they do not think of them, nor the sight of His beauty which enraptures them, for they do not look at it. Only they feel in the depths of their heart a deep wound, yet so delightful that they rest in their pain, and find their pleasure in their grief.

They believe now that they have arrived at the consummation of all, for though they are full of the faults I have mentioned, and many others yet more dangerous, which are better perceived in the following degree than in this, they rest in their fancied perfection, and stopping at the means, which they mistake for the end, they would remain stationary, if God did not bring the torrent, which

is now like a peaceful lake on a mountain-top, to the brow of the hill in order to precipitate it, and to start it on a course which will be more or less rapid according to the depth of its fall.

It appears to me that even the most advanced in this degree have a habit of concealing their faults, both from themselves and others, always finding excuses and extenuations; not designedly, but from a certain love of their own excellence, and a habitual dissimulation under which they hide themselves. The faults which cause them the deepest solicitude are those which are most apparent to others. They have a hidden love of self, stronger than ever, an esteem for their own position, a secret desire to attract attention, an affected modesty, a facility in judging others, and a preference for private devotion rather than domestic duties, which renders them the cause of many of the sins of those around them. This is of great importance. The soul, feeling itself drawn so strongly and sweetly, desires to be always alone and in prayer, which gives rise to two evils—the first, that in its seasons of greatest liberty it spends too

much time in solitude ; the second, that when its vigour of love is exhausted, as it often is in this way, it has not the same strength in times of dryness ; it finds it difficult to remain so long in prayer ; it readily shortens the time ; its thoughts wander to exterior objects ; then it is discouraged and cast down, thinking that all is lost, and does everything in its power to restore itself to the presence and favour of God.

But if such persons were strong enough to live an even life, and not to seek to do more in seasons of abundance than in times of barrenness, they would satisfy every one. As it is, they are troublesome to those around them, to whom they cannot condescend, making it a favour to lay themselves out for the satisfaction of others : they preserve an austere silence when it is unnecessary, and at other times talk incessantly of the things of God. A wife has scruples about pleasing her husband, entertaining him, walking with him, or seeking to amuse him, but has none about speaking uselessly for two hours with religious devotees. This is a horrible abuse. We ought to be diligent in the discharge

of all duties, whatever their nature may be ; and even if they do cause us inconvenience, we shall yet find great profit in doing this, not perhaps in the way we imagine, but in hastening the crucifixion of self. It even seems as though our Lord shows that such sacrifice is pleasing to Him by the grace which He sheds upon it. I knew a lady who, when playing at cards with her husband in order to please him, experienced such deep and intimate communion with God as she never felt in prayer, and it was the same with everything she did at her husband's desire ; but if she neglected these things for others which she thought better, she was conscious that she was not walking in the will of God. This did not prevent her often committing faults, because the attractions of meditation and the happiness of devotion, which are preferred to these apparent losses of time, insensibly draw the soul away, and lead it to change its course, and this by most people is looked upon as sanctity. However, those who are to be taught the way of faith are not suffered long to remain in these errors, because, as God designs to lead

them on to better things, He makes them conscious of their deficiency. It often happens, too, that persons by means of this death to self, and acting contrary to their natural inclinations, feel themselves more strongly drawn to their inward rest; for it is natural to man to desire most strongly what it is most difficult for him to obtain, and to desire most intensely those things which he most earnestly resolves to avoid. This difficulty of being able to enjoy only a partial rest increases the rest, and causes them even in activity to feel themselves acted upon so powerfully that they seem to have two souls within them, the inner one being infinitely stronger than the outer. But if they leave their duties in order to give the time to devotion, they will find it an empty form, and all its joy will be lost. By devotion I do not mean compulsory prayer, which is gone through as a duty that must not be avoided; neither do I understand by activity the labours of their own choice, but those which come within the range of positive duty. If they have spare time at their disposal, by all means let them spend it in prayer; nor must

they lay upon themselves unnecessary burdens, and call them obligations. When the taste for meditation is very great, the soul does not usually fall into these last-named errors, but rather into the former one, that of courting retirement. I knew a person who spent more time in prayer when it was painful to her than when she felt it a delight, struggling with the disinclination; but this is injurious to the health, because of the violence which it does to the senses and the understanding, which being unable to concentrate themselves upon any one object, and being deprived of the sweet communion which formerly held them in subjection to God, endure such torment, that the subject of it would rather suffer the greatest trial than the violence which is necessary to enable it to fix its thoughts on God. The person to whom I alluded sometimes passed two or three hours successively in this painful devotion, and she has assured me that the strangest austerities would have been delightful to her in comparison with the time thus spent. But as a violence so strong as this in subjects so weak is calculated to ruin both body and

mind, I think it is better not in any way to regulate the time spent in prayer by our varying emotions. This painful dryness of which I have spoken belongs only to the first degree of faith, and is often the effect of exhaustion; and yet those who have passed through it imagine themselves dead, and write and speak of it as the most sorrowful part of the spiritual life. It is true they have not known the contrary experience, and often they have not the courage to pass through this, for in this sorrow the soul is deserted by God, who withdraws from it His sensible helps, but it is nevertheless caused by the senses, because, being accustomed to see and to feel, and never having experienced a similar privation, they are in despair, which however is not of long duration, for the forces of the soul are not then in a state to bear for long such a pressure; it will either go back to seek for spiritual food, or else it will give all up. This is why the Lord does not fail to return: sometimes He does not even suffer the prayer to cease before He reappears; and if He does not return during the hour of prayer,

He comes in a more manifest way during the day.

It seems as though He repented of the suffering He has caused to the soul of His beloved, or that He would pay back with usury what she has suffered for His love. . If this consolation last for many days, it becomes painful. She calls Him sweet and cruel: she asks Him if He has only wounded her that she may die. But this kind Lover laughs at her pain, and applies to the wound a balm so sweet, that she could ask to be continually receiving fresh wounds, that she might always find a new delight in a healing which not only restores her former health, but imparts one yet more abundant.

Hitherto it has only been a play of love, to which the soul would easily become accustomed if her Beloved did not change His conduct. O poor hearts who complain of the flights of love! You do not know that this is only a farce, an attempt, a specimen of what is to follow. The hours of absence mark the days, the weeks, the months, and the years. You must learn to be generous at

your own expense, to suffer your Beloved to come and go at His pleasure. I seem to see these young brides. They are at the height of grief when their Beloved leaves them : they mourn His absence as if it were death, and endeavour, as far as they can, to prevent His departure. This love appears deep and strong, but it is not so by any means. It is the pleasure they derive from the sight of their Beloved which they mourn after. It is their own satisfaction they seek, for if it were the pleasure of their Beloved, they would rejoice in the pleasure which He found apart from them, as much as in that which He found with them. So it is self-interested love, though it does not appear such to them ; on the contrary, they believe that they only love Him for what He is. It is true, poor souls, you do love Him for what He is, but you love Him because of the pleasure you find in what He is. You reply that you are willing to suffer for your Beloved. True, provided He will be the witness and the companion of your suffering. You say you desire no recompense. I agree ; but you do desire that He should know of your suffer-

ing, and approve of it. You want Him to take pleasure in it. Is there anything more plausible than the desire that He for whom we suffer should know it, and approve of it, and take delight in it? Oh, how much you are out in your reckoning! Your jealous Lover will not permit you to enjoy the pleasure which you take in seeing His satisfaction with your sorrow. You must suffer without His appearing to see it, or to approve of it, or to know it. That would be too great a gratification. What pain would we not suffer on such conditions! What! to know that our Beloved sees our woes, and takes an infinite pleasure in them! This is too great a pleasure for a generous heart! Yet I am sure the greatest generosity of those in this degree never goes beyond this. But to suffer without our Beloved being aware of it, when He seems to despise what we do to please Him, and to turn away from it; to have only scorn for what formerly seemed to charm Him; to see Him repay with a terrible coldness and distance what we do for His sake alone, and with terrible flights all our pursuit of Him; to lose without complaint all that

He had formerly given as pledges of His love, and which we think we have repaid by our love, our fidelity, and our suffering; not only uncomplainingly to suffer ourselves to be thus despoiled, but to see others enriched with our spoils, and nevertheless not to cease to do what would please our absent Lover; not to cease following after Him; and if by unfaithfulness or surprise we stop for a moment, to redouble our speed, without fearing or contemplating the precipices, although we fall a thousand times, till we are so weary that we lose our strength, and die from continual fatigue; when, perhaps, if our Beloved turns and looks upon us, His glance restores life by the exquisite pleasure it gives; until at last He becomes so cruel that He lets us die for want of help: all this, I say, belongs not to this state, but to that which follows. I must remark here, that the degree of which I have been speaking is of very long duration, at least unless God intends the soul to make great advances; and many, as I have said, never pass it.

CHAPTER VI.

SECOND DEGREE OF THE PASSIVE WAY OF FAITH—SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THIS DEGREE—ENTRANCE INTO IT AND USELESS EFFORTS TO AVOID IT—GRADATIONS AND ADVANCEMENTS IN THIS DEGREE, IN WHICH OCCUR FREQUENT MANIFESTATIONS OF CHRIST TO THE SOUL—THE USES AND ABUSES WHICH IT MAKES OF THEM, BY WHICH IT IS BROUGHT TO MYSTICAL DEATH, OR TO THE THIRD DEGREE OF THIS PASSIVE WAY OF FAITH.

THE torrent having come to the brow of the hill, enters at the same time into the *second degree of the passive way of faith*. This soul, which was so peacefully resting on the mountain-top, had no thought of leaving it. However, for want of a declivity, these waters of Heaven by their stay upon earth were becoming tainted; for there is this difference between stagnant waters which have no outlet, and those which are in motion and have an outlet, that the first, with the exception of the sea, and those large lakes which resemble it, grow putrid, and their want of motion causes their destruc-

tion. But when, after leaving their source, they have an easy outlet, the more rapidly they flow, the more they are preserved.

You will remember I remarked before of this soul, that as soon as God imparted to it the gift of *passive* faith, He gave it at the same time an instinct to seek after Him as its centre ; but in its unfaithfulness it stifles by its repose this instinct to seek God, and would remain stationary, if God did not revive this instinct by bringing it to the edge of the mountain, whence it is compelled to precipitate itself. At first it is sensible that it has lost that calmness which it expected to retain for ever. Its waters, formerly so tranquil, begin to be noisy. A tumult is seen in its waves ; they run and dash over. But where do they run ? Alas ! as they imagine, it is to their own destruction. If it were in their power to desire anything, they would wish to restrain themselves, and return to their former calm. But this is impossible. The declivity is found ; they must be precipitated from slope to slope. It is no longer a question of abyss or of loss. The water, that is the soul, always reappears,

and is never lost in this degree. It is embroiled and precipitated ; one wave follows another, and the other takes it up and crashes it by its precipitation. Yet this water finds on the slope of the mountain certain flat places where it takes a little relaxation. It delights in the clearness of its waters ; and it sees that its falls, its course, this breaking of its waves upon the rocks, have served to render it more pure. It finds itself delivered from its noise and storms, and thinks it has now found its resting-place ; and it believes this the more readily because it cannot doubt that the state through which it has just passed has greatly purified it, for it sees that its waters are clearer, and it no longer perceives the disagreeable odour which certain stagnant parts had given to it on the top of the mountain ; it has even acquired a certain insight into its own condition ; it has seen by the troubled state of its passions (the waves) that they were not lost, but only asleep. As when it was descending the mountain, on its way to this level, it thought it was losing its way, and had no hope of recovering its lost peace, so now that it no longer hears the dash

of its waves, that it finds itself flowing calmly and pleasantly along the sand, it forgets its former trouble, and never imagines there will be a return of it: it sees that it has acquired fresh purity, and does not fear that it will again become soiled; for here it is not stagnant, but flows as gently and brightly as possible. Ah, poor torrent! You think you have found your resting-place, and are firmly established in it! You begin to delight in your waters. The swans glide upon them, and rejoice in their beauty. But what is your surprise while, as you are flowing along so happily, you suddenly encounter a steeper slope, longer and more dangerous than the first! Then the torrent recommences its tumult. Formerly it was only a moderate noise; now it is insupportable. It descends with a crash and a roar greater than ever. It can hardly be said to have a bed, for it falls from rock to rock, and dashes down without order or reason; it alarms every one by its noise; all fear to approach it. Ah, poor torrent! what will you do? You drag away in your fury all that comes in your way; you feel nothing but the declivity down which you are

hurried, and you think you are lost. Nay, do not fear; you are not lost, but the time of your happiness is not yet come. There must be many more disturbances and losses before then; you have but just commenced your course.

At last this dashing torrent feels that it has gained the foot of the mountain and another level spot. It resumes its former calm, and even a deeper one; and after having passed it may be years in these changes, it enters the third degree, before speaking of which I will touch upon the condition of those who enter it, and the first steps in it. The soul having passed some time in the tranquillity of which we have spoken, which it imagines it has secured for ever, and having, as it supposes, acquired all the virtues in their full extent, believing all its passions to be dead; when it is expecting to enjoy with the greatest safety a happiness it has no fear of losing, is astonished to find that, instead of mounting higher, or at least remaining in its present position, it comes to the slope of the mountain. It begins, to its amazement, to be sensible of an inclination for the things it had given up. It sees

its deep calm suddenly disturbed ; distractions come in crowds, one upon another ; the soul finds only stones in its path, dryness and aridity. A feeling of distaste comes into prayer. Its passions, which it thought were dead, but which were only asleep, all revive.

It is completely astonished at this change. It would like either to return to the top of the mountain, or at least to remain where it is ; but this cannot be. The declivity is found, and the soul must fall (not into sin, but into a privation of the previous degree and of feeling). It does its best to rise after it falls ; it does all in its power to restrain itself, and to cling to some devotional exercise ; it makes an effort to recover its former peace ; it seeks solitude in the hope of recovering it. But its labour is in vain. It resigns itself to suffer its dejection, and hates the sin which has occasioned it. It longs to put things right, but can find no means of doing it ; the torrent must go on its way ; it drags with it all that is opposed to it. Then, seeing that it no longer finds support in God, it seeks it in the creature ; but it finds

none ; and its unfaithfulness only increases its apprehension. At last, the poor bride, not knowing what to do, weeping everywhere the loss of her Beloved, is filled with astonishment when He again reveals Himself to her. At first she is charmed at the sight, as she feared she had lost Him for ever. She is all the more happy, because she finds that He has brought with Him new wealth, a new purity, a great distrust of self. She has no longer the desire to stop, as she formerly had ; she goes on continuously, but peacefully and gently, and yet she has fears lest her peace should be disturbed. She trembles lest she should again lose the treasure which is all the dearer to her because she had been so sensible of its loss. She is afraid she may displease Him, and that He will leave her again. She tries to be more faithful to Him, and not to make an end of the means.

However, this repose carries away the soul, ravishes it, and renders it idle. It cannot help being sensible of its peace, and it desires to be always alone. It has again acquired a spiritual greediness. To rob it of solitude is to rob it of

life. It is still more selfish than before, what it possesses being more delightful. It seems to be in a new rest. It is going along calmly, when all at once it comes to another descent, steeper and longer than the former one. It is suddenly seized with a fresh surprise; it endeavours to hold itself back, but in vain; it must fall; it must dash on from rock to rock. It is astonished to find that it has lost its love for prayer and devotion. It does violence to itself by continuing in it. It finds only death at every step. That which formerly revived it is now the cause of its death. Its peace has gone, and has left a trouble and agitation stronger than ever, caused as much by the passions, which revive (though against its will) with the more strength as they appeared the more extinct, as by crosses, which increase outwardly, and which it has no strength to bear. It arms itself with patience; it weeps, groans, and is troubled. The Bride complains that her Beloved has forsaken her; but her complaints are unheeded. Life has become death to her. All that is good she finds difficult, but has an inclination towards evil which draws

her away. But she can find no rest in the creature, having tasted of the Creator. She dashes on more vehemently; and the steeper the rocks, and the greater the obstacles which oppose her course, the more she redoubles her speed. She is like the dove from the ark, which, finding no rest for the sole of its foot, was obliged to return. But alas! what could the poor dove have done if, when it desired to re-enter the ark, Noah had not put out his hand to take it in? It could only have fluttered round about the ark, seeking rest but finding none. So this poor dove flutters round the ark till the Divine Noah, having compassion on her distress, opens the door and receives her to Himself. Oh, wonderful and loving invention of the goodness of God! He only eludes the search of the soul to make it flee more quickly to Him. He hides Himself that He may be sought after. He apparently lets her fall, that He may have the joy of sustaining her and raising her up. Oh, strong and vigorous ones, who have never experienced these artifices of love, these apparent jealousies, these flights, lovely to the soul which has passed them, but terrible to those who

experience them! You, I say, who do not know these flights of love, because you are satisfied with the abiding presence of your Beloved; or, if He hide Himself, it is for so short a time that you cannot judge of the joy of His presence by the pain of a long absence; you have never experienced your weakness, and your need of His help; but those who are thus forsaken learn to lean no longer on themselves, but only on the Beloved. His rigours have rendered His gentleness the more needful for them.

These persons often commit faults through sheer weakness, and because they are deprived of all sensible support; and these faults so fill them with shame, that, if they could, they would hide themselves from their Beloved. Alas! in the terrible confusion into which they are thrown, He gives them a glimpse of Himself. He touches them with His sceptre, like another Ahasuerus (Esther v. 2), that they may not die; but His tender caresses only serve to increase their confusion at the thought of having displeased Him. At other times He makes them sensible, by His severity, how much their un-

faithfulness displeases Him. Oh! then if they could sink into dust, they would. They would do anything to repair the injury done to God; and if, by any slight neglects, which appear crimes to them, they have offended their neighbour, what return are they not willing to make? But it is pitiful to see the state of that one who has driven away her Beloved. She does not cease to run after Him, but the faster she goes, the further He seems to leave her behind; and if He stops, it is only for a moment, that she may recover breath. She feels now that she must die; for she no longer finds life in anything; all has become death to her; prayer, reading, conversation—all is dead: she loses the joy of service, or rather, she dies to it, performing it with so much pain and weariness, that it is as death to her. At last, after having fought well, but uselessly, after a long succession of conflicts and rest, of lives and deaths, she begins to see how she has abused the grace of God, and that this state of death is better for her than life; for as she sees her Beloved returning, and finds that she possesses Him more purely, and that the state which pre-

ceded her rejoicing was a purification for her, she abandons herself willingly to *death*, and to the coming and going of her Beloved, giving Him full liberty to go and come as He will. She receives instruction as she is able to bear it. Little by little she loses her joy in herself, and is thus prepared for a new condition.

But before speaking of it, let me say, that in proportion as the soul advances, its joys become short, simple, and pure, and its privations long and agonising, until it has lost its *own* joy, to find it no more: and this is the *third degree*, that of *death*, *burial*, and *decay*. This second degree ends in death, and goes no further.

CHAPTER VII.

SECTION I.

THIRD DEGREE OF THE PASSIVE WAY OF FAITH, IN ITS COMMENCEMENT, AND ITS PROGRESS BY VARIOUS SPECIAL DEATHS TO A TOTAL DEATH, TO BURIAL, AND TO DECAY—DURATION OF THIS TRANSITION, IN WHICH THERE MUST BE NO ADVANCEMENT BEYOND FAITH, NOR ANY RECEDING—SPOILIATION OF THE SOUL, AND THE THREE DEGREES OF IT—FIRST DEGREE, WHICH CONCERNS GIFTS, GRACES, AND FAVOURS, OR ORNAMENTS—ITS NECESSITY AND EFFECTS.

YOU have seen dying persons who, after they have been believed to be dead, have all at once assumed a new strength, and retained it until their death; as a lamp whose oil is spent flickers in the surrounding darkness, but only to die out the more quickly: thus the soul casts out flames, which only last for a moment. It has bravely resisted death; but its oil is spent: the Sun of Righteousness has so withered it up, that it is forced to

die. But does this Sun design anything else with its fierce rays, except the consumption of the soul? And the poor soul thus burned thinks that it is frozen! The truth is, that the torment it suffers prevents its recognising the nature of its pain. So long as the Sun was obscured by clouds, and gave out rays to a certain extent moderated, it felt the heat, and thought it was burning, while in reality it was but slightly warmed: but when the Sun flashed full upon it, then the soul felt itself burning, without believing that it was so much as warmed. O loving deceit! O sweet and cruel Love! Have you lovers only to deceive them thus? You wound these hearts, and then hide your darts, and make them pursue after that which has wounded them. You attract them, and show yourself to them, and when they long to possess you, you flee from them. When you see the soul reduced to the last extremity, and out of breath from its constant pursuit, you show yourself for a moment that it may recover life, only to be killed a thousand times with ever-increasing severity.

O rigorous Lover! innocent murderer! Why dost Thou not kill with a single blow? Why give

wine to an expiring heart, and restore life in order to destroy it afresh? This is Thy sport. Thou woundest to the death; and when Thou seest the victim on the point of expiring, Thou healest one wound in order to inflict another! Alas! usually we die but once; and the very cruellest murderers in times of persecution, though they prolonged life, it is true, yet were content to destroy it but once. But Thou, less compassionate than they, takest away our life time after time, and restorest it again.

O life, which cannot be lost without so many deaths! O death, which can only be attained by the loss of so many lives! Perhaps this soul, after thou hast devoured it in Thy bosom, will enjoy its Beloved. That would be too great happiness for it: it must undergo another torture. It must be *buried* and reduced to *ashes*. But perhaps it will then arrive at the end of its sufferings, for bodies which decay suffer no longer. Oh! it is not thus with the soul: it suffers continually; and burial, decay, and nothingness are even more sensibly felt by it than death itself.

This degree of *death* is extremely long, and as I

have said that very few pass the other degrees, so I say that far less pass this one. Many people have been astonished to see very holy persons, who have lived like angels, die in terrible anguish, and even despairing of their salvation. It is because they have died in this mystical death; and as God wished to promote their advancement, because they were near their end, He redoubled their sorrow. The work of stripping the soul must be left wholly to God. He will do the work perfectly, and the soul will second the spoliation and the death, without putting hindrances in the way. But to do the work for ourselves is to lose everything, and to make a vile state of a divine one. There are persons who, hearing of this spoliation, have effected it for themselves, and remain always stationary; for as the stripping is their own work, God does not clothe them with Himself. The design of God in stripping the soul is to clothe it again. He only impoverishes that He may enrich, and He substitutes *Himself* for all that He takes away, which cannot be the case with those whose spoliation is their own work. They indeed lose the gifts of

God, but they do not possess God Himself in exchange.

In this degree the soul has not learned to let itself be stripped, emptied, impoverished, killed; and all its efforts to sustain itself will but be its irreparable loss, for it is seeking to preserve a life which must be lost. As a person wishing to cause a lamp to die out without extinguishing it, would only have to cease to supply it with oil, and it would die out of itself; but if this person, while persistently expressing a wish that the lamp should go out, continued replenishing it with oil from time to time, the lamp would never go out: it is the same with the soul in this degree, which holds on, however feebly, to life. If it consoles itself, does not suffer itself to be killed, in a word, if it performs any actions of life whatever, it will thereby retard its death. O poor soul! fight no longer against death, and you will live by your death. I seem to see a drowning man before me; he makes every effort to rise to the surface of the water; he holds on to anything that offers itself to his grasp; he preserves his life so long as his strength holds

out ; he is only drowned when that strength fails. It is thus with Christians. They endeavour as long as possible to prevent their death ; it is only the failure of all power which makes them die. God, who wishes to hasten this death, and who has compassion upon them, cuts off the hands with which they cling to a support, and thus obliges them to sink into the deep. Crosses become multiplied, and the more they increase, the greater is the helplessness to bear them, so that they seem as though they never could be borne. The most painful part of this condition is, that the trouble always begins by some fault in the sufferer, who believes he has brought it upon himself.

At last the soul is reduced to utter self-despair. It consents that God should deprive it of the joy of His gifts, and admits that He is just in doing it. It does not even hope to possess these gifts again.

When those who are in this condition see others who are manifestly living in communion with God, their anguish is redoubled, and they sink in the sense of their own nothingness. They long to be able to imitate them, but finding all their efforts

useless, they are compelled to die. They say in the language of Scripture, "The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me" (Job iii. 25). What! they say, to lose God, and to lose Him for ever, without the hope of ever finding Him again! To be deprived of love for time and for eternity! To be unable to love Him whom I know to be so worthy of my affection!

Oh! is it not sufficient, Divine Lover, to cast off your spouse, to turn away from her, without compelling her to lose love, and lose it, as it seems, for ever? She believes she has lost it, and yet she never loved more strongly or more purely. She has indeed lost the vigour, the sensible strength of love; but she has not lost love itself; on the contrary, she possesses it in a greater degree than ever. She cannot believe this, and yet it is easily known; for the heart cannot exist without love. If it does not love God, its affection is concentrated upon some other object: but here the bride of Christ is far from taking pleasure in anything. She regards the revolt of her passions and her involuntary faults as terrible crimes, which draw upon her the hatred

of her Beloved. She seeks to cleanse and to purify herself, but she is no sooner washed than she seems to fall into a slough yet more filthy and polluted than that from which she has just escaped. She does not see that it is because she runs that she contracts defilement, and falls so frequently, yet she is so ashamed to run in this condition, that she does not know where to hide herself. Her garments are soiled ; she loses all she has in the race.

Her Bridegroom aids in her spoliation for two reasons : the first, because she has soiled her beautiful garments by her vain complaisances, and has appropriated the gifts of God in reflections of self-esteem. The second, because in running, her course will be impeded by this burden of appropriation ; even the fear of losing such riches would lessen her speed.

O poor soul ! what art thou become ? Formerly thou wast the delight of thy Bridegroom, when He took such pleasure in adorning and beautifying thee ; now thou art so naked, so ragged, so poor, that thou darrest neither to look upon thyself nor to appear before Him. Those who gaze upon thee,

who, after having so much admired thee, see thee now so disfigured, believe that either thou hast grown mad, or that thou hast committed some great crime, which has caused thy Beloved to abandon thee. They do not see that this jealous Husband, who desires that His bride should be His alone, seeing that she is amusing herself with her ornaments, that she delights in them, that she is in love with herself; seeing this, I say, and that she sometimes ceases looking at Him in order to look at herself, and that her love to Him is growing cold because her self-love is so strong, is stripping her, and taking away all her beauties and riches from before her eyes.

In the abundance of her wealth, she takes delight in contemplating herself: she sees good qualities in herself, which engage her affection, and alienate it from her Bridegroom. In her foolishness she does not see that she is only fair with the beauties of her Beloved; and that if He removed these, she would be so hideous that she would be frightened at herself. More than this, she neglects to follow Him wherever He goes; she fears lest she may

spoil her complexion, or lose her jewels. O jealous Love! how well is it that thou comest to chastise this proud one, and to take from her what Thou hast given, that she may learn to know herself, and that, being naked and destitute, nothing may impede her course.

Thus, then, our Lord strips the soul little by little, robbing her of her ornaments, all her gifts, positions, and favours—that is, as to her perception or conscious possession of them—which are like jewels that weigh her down; then He takes away her natural capacity for good, which are her garments; after which He destroys her personal beauty, which sets forth divine virtue, which she finds it impossible to practise.

This spoliation commences with the graces, gifts, and favours of conscious love. The bride sees that her husband takes from her, little by little, the riches He had bestowed upon her. At first she is greatly troubled by this loss; but what troubles her the most, is not so much the loss of her riches, as the anger of her Beloved; for she thinks it is in anger that He thus takes back His gifts. She sees the

abuse she had made of them, and the delight she had been taking in them, which so fills her with shame that she is ready to die of confusion. She lets Him do as He will, and dares not say, "Why dost Thou take from me what Thou hast given?" for she sees that she deserves it, and looks on in silence.

Though she keeps silence, it is not so profound now as afterwards; it is broken by mingled sobs and sighs. But she is astonished to find, when she looks at her Bridegroom, that He appears to be angry with her for weeping over His justice towards her, in no longer allowing her the opportunity of abusing His gifts, and for thinking so lightly of the abuse she has made of them. She tries then to let Him know that she does not care about the loss of His gifts, if only He will cease His anger towards her. She shows Him her tears and her grief at having displeased Him. It is true that she is so sensible of the anger of her Beloved that she no longer thinks of her riches. After allowing her to weep for a long time, her Lover appears to be appeased. He consoles her, and with His own

hand He dries her tears. What a joy it is to her to see the new goodness of her Beloved, after what she has done ! Yet He does not restore her former riches, and she does not long for them, being only too happy to be looked upon, consoled, and caressed by Him. At first she receives His caresses with so much confusion, that she dare not lift her eyes, but forgetting her past woes in her present happiness, she loses herself in the new caresses of her Beloved, and thinking no more of her past miseries, she glories and rests in these caresses, and thereby compels the Bridegroom to be angry again, and to despoil her anew. .

It must be observed that God despoils the loss little by little ; and the weaker the souls may be, the longer the spoliation continues ; while the stronger they are, the sooner it is completed, because God despoils them oftener and of more things at once. But however rough this spoliation may be, it only touches superfluities on the outside, that is to say, gifts, graces, and favours.

This leading of God is so wonderful, and is the result of such deep love to the soul, that it would

never be believed, except by those who have experienced it ; for the heart is so full of itself, and so permeated with self-esteem, that if God did not treat it thus, it would be lost.

It will perhaps be asked, If the gifts of God are productive of such evil consequences, why are they given? God gives them, in the fulness of His goodness, in order to draw the soul from sin, from attachment to the creature, and to bring it back to Himself. But these same gifts with which He gratifies it—that He may wean it from earth and from self to love Him, at least from gratitude—we use to excite our self-love and self-admiration, to amuse ourselves with them ; and self-love is so deeply rooted in man, that it is augmented by these gifts ; for he finds in himself new charms, which he had not discovered before ; he delights in them, and appropriates to himself what belongs only to God. It is true, God could deliver him from it, but He does not do it, for reasons known only to Himself. The soul, thus despoiled by God, loses a little of its self-love, and begins to see that it was not so rich as it fancied, but that all its virtue was in Christ ; it sees

that it has abused His grace, and consents that He should take back His gifts. The bride says, "I shall be rich with the riches of my Bridegroom, and though He may keep them, yet, from my union in heart and will with Him, they will still be mine." She is even glad to lose these gifts of God; she finds herself unencumbered, better fitted for walking. Gradually she becomes accustomed to this spoliation; she knows it has been good for her; she is no longer grieved because of it; and, as she is so beautiful, she satisfies herself that she will not cease to please her Bridegroom by her natural beauty and her simple garments, as much as she could with all her ornaments.

SECTION II.

SECOND DEGREE OF THE SPOILIATION OF THE SOUL, AS TO ITS GARMENTS, OR ITS FACILITY FOR THE EXTERIOR PRACTICE OF VIRTUE—ITS CAUSES, WHICH ARE THE APPROPRIATION OF THESE VIRTUES, AND SATISFACTION IN THEM, INSTEAD OF THE RECOGNITION OF NATURAL HELPLESSNESS, AND ABSENCE OF ALL GOOD IN SELF.

When the poor bride is expecting always to live in peace, in spite of this loss, and sees clearly the

good which has resulted to her from it, and the harm she had done to herself by the bad use which she had made of the gifts which now have been taken from her, she is completely astonished to find that the Bridegroom, who had only given her temporary peace because of her weakness, comes with yet greater violence to tear off her clothing from her.

Alas, poor bride ! what wilt thou do now ? This is far worse than before, for these garments are necessary to her, and it is contrary to all propriety to suffer herself to be stripped of them. Oh ! it is now that she makes all the resistance in her power. She brings forward all the reasons why her Bridegroom should not thus leave her naked : she tells Him that it will bring reproach upon Himself. "Alas !" she cries, "I have lost all the virtues which Thou hast bestowed upon me, Thy gifts, the sweetness of Thy love ! But still I was able to make an outward profession of virtue ; I engaged in works of charity ; I prayed assiduously, even though I was deprived of Thy sensible benefits : but I cannot consent to lose all this. I was still clothed

according to my position, and looked upon by the world as Thy bride : but if I lose my garments, it will bring shame upon Thee." "It matters not, poor soul ; thou must consent to this loss also : thou dost not yet know thyself ; thou believest that thy raiment is thine own, and that thou canst use it as thou wilt. But though I acquired it at such a cost, thou hast given it back to me as if it were a recompense on thy part for the labours I have endured for Thee. Let it go ; thou must lose it." The soul having done its best to keep it, lets it go, little by little, and finds itself gradually despoiled. It finds no inclination for anything ; on the contrary, all is distasteful to it. Formerly it had aversions and difficulties, without absolute powerlessness ; but here all power is taken from it : its strength of body and mind fails entirely ; the inclination for better things alone remains, and this is the last robe, which must finally be lost.

This is done very gradually, and the process is extremely painful, because the bride sees all the while that it has been caused by her own folly. She dares not speak, lest she may irritate the Bride-

groom, whose anger is worse to her than death. She begins to know herself better, to see that she is nothing in herself, and that all belongs to her Bridegroom. She begins to distrust herself, and, little by little, she loses her self-esteem.

But she does not yet hate herself, for she is still beautiful, though naked. From time to time she casts a pitiful look towards the Bridegroom, but she says not a word : she is grieved at His anger. It seems to her that the spoliation would be of little moment if she had not offended Him, and if she had not rendered herself unworthy to wear her nuptial robes.

If she was confused when at the first her riches were taken from her, her confusion at the sight of her nakedness is infinitely more painful. She cannot bear to appear before her Bridegroom, so deep is her shame. But she must remain, and run hither and thither in this state. What! is it not even permitted to her to hide herself? No; she must appear thus in public. The world begins to think less highly of her. It says, "Is this that bride who was once the admiration of angels and of men?"

See how she has fallen!" These words increase her confusion, because she is well aware that her Bridegroom has dealt justly with her. She does what she can to induce Him to clothe her a little, but He will do nothing, after having thus stripped her of all, for her garments would satisfy her by covering her, and would prevent her seeing herself as she is.

It is a great surprise to a soul that thinks itself far advanced towards perfection to see itself thus despoiled all at once. It imagines the old sins, from which it was once purged, must have returned. But it is mistaken: the secret is, that she was so hidden by her garments as to be unable to see what she was. It is a terrible thing for a soul to be thus stripped of the gifts and graces of God, and it is impossible that any should know or imagine what it is without the actual experience of it.

SECTION III.

THIRD DEGREE OF THE SPOILIATION OF THE SOUL, WHICH CONCERNS ITS BEAUTY, OR THE PERCEPTIBLE ACTION OF DIVINE VIRTUE — HOW GOD THUS LEADS THE SOUL TO SELF-DESPAIR AND TO TRUE PURITY—INTERVAL OF REST, FOLLOWED BY THE INCREASE OF THE PRECEDING OPERATIONS, TILL THEY END IN MYSTIC DEATH.

All this would be but little if the bride still retained her beauty ; but the Bridegroom robs her of that also. Hitherto she has been despoiled of gifts, graces, and favours (facility for good) : she has lost all good works, such as outward charity, care for the poor, readiness to help others, but she has not lost the divine virtues. Here, however, these too must be lost, so far as their practice is concerned, or rather the habit of exercising them, as acquired by herself, in order to appear fair : in reality, they are all the while being more strongly implanted. She loses virtue as virtue, but it is only that she may find it again in CHRIST. This degraded bride becomes, as she imagines, filled with pride. She, who was so patient, who suffered so easily, finds that she can suffer nothing. Her senses revolt

her by continual distractions. She can no longer restrain herself by her own efforts, as formerly ; and what is worse, she contracts defilement at every step. She complains to her Beloved that the watchmen that go about the city have found her and wounded her (Cant. v. 7). I ought, however, to say that persons in this condition do not sin willingly. God usually reveals to them such a deep-seated corruption within themselves, that they cry with Job, "Oh, that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldest keep me in secret, until Thy wrath be past!" (Job xiv. 13).

It must not be supposed that either here or at any other stage of progress God suffers the soul really to fall into sin ; and so truly is this the case, that though they appear in their own eyes the most miserable sinners, yet they can discover no definite sin of which they are guilty, and only accuse themselves of being full of misery, and of having only sentiments contrary to their desires. It is to the glory of God that, when He makes the soul most deeply conscious of its inward corruption, He does not permit it to fall into sin. What makes its sorrow so terrible

is, that it is overwhelmed with a sense of the purity of God, and that purity makes the smallest imperfection appear as a heinous sin, because of the infinite distance between the purity of God and the impurity of the creature. The soul sees that it was originally created pure by God, and that it has contracted not only the original sin of Adam, but thousands of actual sins, so that its confusion is greater than can be expressed. The reason why Christians in this condition are despised by others, is not to be found in any particular faults which are observed in them, but because, as they no longer manifest the same ardour and fidelity which formerly distinguished them, the greatness of their fall is judged from this, which is a great mistake. Let this serve to explain or modify any statements or representations in the sequel, which may appear to be expressed too strongly, and which those who do not understand the experience might be liable to misinterpret. Observe, also, that when I speak of *corruption*, of *decay*, &c., I mean the destruction of the old man by the central conviction, and by an intimate experience of the depth of im-

purity and selfishness which there is in the heart of man, which, bringing him to see himself as he is apart from God, causes him to cry with David, "I am a worm and no man" (Ps. xxii. 6), and with Job, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me" (Job ix. 30, 31).

It is not, then, that this poor bride commits the faults of which she imagines herself guilty, for in heart she was never purer than now; but her senses and natural powers, particularly the senses, being unsupported, wander away. Besides which, as the speed of her course towards God redoubles, and she forgets herself more, it is not to be wondered at that in running she soils herself in the muddy places through which she passes; and as all her attention is directed towards her Beloved, although she does not perceive it by reason of her own condition, she thinks no more of herself, and does not notice where she steps. So that, while believing herself most guilty, she does not willingly commit a single sin; though all her sins appear

voluntary to herself, they are rather faults of surprise, which often she does not see until after they are committed. She cries to her Bridegroom, but He does not heed her, at least not perceptibly, though He sustains her with an invisible hand. Sometimes she tries to do better, but then she becomes worse; for the design of her Bridegroom in letting her fall *without wounding herself* (Ps. xxxvii. 24) is that she should lean no longer on herself; that she should recognise her helplessness; that she should sink into complete self-despair; and that she should say, "My soul chooseth death rather than life" (Job vii. 15). It is here that the soul begins truly to *hate itself*, and to *know itself* as it would never have done if it had not passed through this experience.

All our natural knowledge of self, whatever may be its degree, is not sufficient to cause us really to hate ourselves. "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal" (John xii. 25). It is only such an experience as this which can reveal to the soul its infinite depth of misery. No other

way can give true purity; if it give any at all, it is only superficial, and not in the depth of the heart, where the impurity is seated.

Here God searches the inmost recesses of the soul for that hidden impurity which is the effect of the self-esteem and self-love which He designs to destroy. Take a sponge which is full of impurities, wash it as much as you will, you will clean the outside, but you will not render it clean throughout unless you press it, in order to squeeze out all the filth. This is what God does. He squeezes the soul in a painful manner, but He brings out from it that which was the most deeply hidden.

I say, then, that this is the only way in which we can be purified radically; and without it we should always be filthy, though outwardly we might appear very clean. It is necessary that God should make the soul thoroughly sensible of its condition. We could never believe, without the experience, of what nature left to itself is capable. Yes, indeed, our own being, abandoned to itself, is worse than all devils. Therefore we must not believe that the soul in this state of misery is abandoned by God.

It was never better sustained ; but nature is, as it were, left a little alone, and makes all these ravages without the soul in itself taking any part in them. This poor desolate bride, running hither and thither in search of her Beloved, not only soils herself grievously, as I have said, by falling into faults of surprise and self-esteem, but she wounds herself with the thorns that come in her way. She becomes so wearied at length that she is forced to die in her race for want of help ; that is, to expect nothing from herself or her own activity.

That which is productive of the highest good to the soul in this condition is that God manifests no pity towards it ; and when He desires to promote its advancement, He lets it run even to death ; if He stops it for a moment, by doing which He ravishes and revives it, it is because of its weakness, and in order that its weariness may not compel it to rest.

When He sees that it is becoming disheartened and inclined to give up the race altogether, He looks upon it for a moment, and the poor bride finds herself wounded anew by this look. She

would willingly say to Him, "Alas! why hast Thou thus compelled me to run? Oh, that I could find Thee; and see Thee face to face!" But alas! when she seems to lay hold of Him, He flees from her again. "I sought Thee," she cries, "but I found Thee not" (Cant. iii. 1).

As this look from her Bridegroom has increased her love, she redoubles her speed in order to find Him: nevertheless she was delayed just so long as the look lasted, that is, in sensible joy. This is why the Bridegroom does not often cast such looks upon her, and only when He sees that her courage is failing.

The soul then dies at the end of its race, because all its active strength is exhausted; for though it had been passive, it had not lost its active strength, though it had been unconscious of it. The bride said, "Draw me, we will run after thee" (Cant. i. 3). She ran indeed, but how? By the loss of all; as the sun travels incessantly, yet without quitting his repose. In this condition she so hates herself, that she can hardly suffer herself. She thinks her Bridegroom has good reason to treat her as He does, and that it is His

indignation against her which makes Him leave her. She does not see that it is in order to make her run that He flees, that it is in order that He may purify her that He suffers her to become so soiled. When we put iron in the fire, to purify it and to purge it from its dross, it appears at first to be tarnished and blackened, but afterwards it is easy to see that it has been purified. Christ only makes His bride experience her own weakness, that she may lose all strength and all support in herself, and that, in her self-despair, He may carry her in His arms, and she may be willing to be thus borne; for whatever her course may be, she walks as a child; but when she is in God, and is borne by Him, her progress is infinite, since it is that of God Himself.

In addition to all this degradation, the bride sees others adorned with her spoils. When she sees a holy soul, she dare not approach it; she sees it adorned with all the ornaments which her Bridegroom has taken from her; but though she admires it, and sinks into the depths of nothingness, she cannot desire to have these ornaments again, so conscious

is she of her unworthiness to wear them. She thinks it would be a profanation to put them upon a person so covered with mud and defilement. She even rejoices to see that, if she fills her Beloved with horror, there are others in whom He can take delight, and whom she regards as infinitely happy in having gained the love of her God: as for the ornaments, though she sees others decorated with them, she does not suppose that these are the sources of their happiness. If she sees any blessedness in the possession of them, it is because they are the tokens of the love of her Beloved. When she is thus sensible of her littleness in the presence of such as these, whom she regards as queens, she does not know the good which will result to her from this nakedness, death, and decay. Her Bridegroom only unclothes her that He may be Himself her clothing: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," says St Paul (Rom. xiii. 14). He only kills her that He may be her life: "If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." He only annihilates her that she may be transformed in Himself.

This loss of virtue is only brought about by

degrees, as well as the other losses, and this apparent inclination for evil is involuntary; for that evil which makes us so vile in our own eyes is really no evil at all.

The things which bring defilement to these persons are certain faults which only lie in the feelings. As soon as they see the beauty of a virtue, they seem to be incessantly falling into the contrary vice: for example, if they love truth, they speak hastily or with exaggeration, and fancy they lie at every moment, although in fact they do but speak against their sentiments; and it is thus with all the other virtues; the more important these virtues are, and the more strongly they cling to them, because they appear the more essential, the greater is the force with which they are torn from them.

SECTION IV.

ENTRANCE OF THE SOUL INTO MYSTIC DEATH, AS TO ITS SENSIBILITIES, POWERS, AND EVEN ITS PERCEIVED FOUNDATION—IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS ON THIS CONDITION.

This poor soul, after having lost its all, must at last lose *its own life* by an utter self-despair, or

rather it must die worn out by terrible fatigue. Prayer in this degree is extremely painful, because the soul being no longer able to make use of its own powers, of which it seems to be entirely deprived, and God having taken from it a certain sweet and profound calm which supported it, is left like those poor children whom we see running here and there in search of bread, yet finding no one to supply their need, so that the power of prayer seems to be as entirely lost as if we had never possessed it ; but with this difference, that we feel the pain occasioned by the loss, because we have proved its value by its possession, while others are not sensible of the loss, because they have never known its enjoyment. The soul, then, can find no support in the creature ; and if it feels itself carried away by the things of earth, it is only by impetuosity, and it can find nothing to satisfy it. Not that it does not seek to abandon itself to the things in which it formerly delighted ; but alas ! it finds in them nothing but bitterness, so that it is glad to leave them again, taking nothing back but sadness at its own unfaithfulness.

The *imagination* goes altogether astray, and is

scarcely ever at rest. The three powers of the soul, the *understanding*, the *memory*, and the *will*, by degrees lose their life, so that at length they become altogether dead, which is very painful to the soul, especially as regards the will, which had been tasting I know not what of sweetness and tranquillity, which comforted the other powers in their deadness and powerlessness.

This unexplainable something which sustains the soul at its foundation, as it were, is the hardest of all to lose, and that which the soul endeavours the most strenuously to retain; for as it is too delicate, so it appears the more divine and necessary: it would consent willingly to be deprived of the two other powers, and even of the will, so far as it is a distinct and perceived thing, if only this something might be left; for it could bear all its labours if it may have within itself the witness that it is born of God.

However, this must be lost, like the rest—that is, as to the sentiment—and then the soul enters into the sensible realisation of all the misery with which it is filled. And it is this which really produces *the spiritual death*; for whatever misery the soul might endure, if this, I know not what, were not lost, it

would not die ; and if, on the other hand, this were lost without the soul being conscious of its misery, it would be supported, and would not die. It can easily understand that it must give up all dependence upon its own feelings or upon any natural support, but to lose an almost imperceptible comfort, and to fall from weakness, to fall into the mire, to this it cannot consent. This is where reason fails, this is where terrible fears fill the heart, which seems to have only sufficient life to be sensible of its death.

It is, then, the loss of this imperceptible support, and the experience of this misery, which causes death.

We should be very careful, in such times as these, not to let our senses be led away willingly to creatures, seeking willingly consolation and diversion. I say *willingly*, for we are incapable of mortifications and attentions reflected upon ourselves, and the more we have mortified ourselves, the stronger will be the bearing in the contrary direction, without being aware of it ; like a madman, who goes wandering about, if you attempt to keep him too rigorously within bounds, apart from its being useless, it would retard his death.

What must we do then? We must be careful to give no support to the senses, to suffer them, and to let them find recreation in innocent ways; for as they are not capable of an inward operation, by endeavouring to restrain them we should injure health, and even mental strength. What I say applies only to this degree; for if we were to make this use of the senses in the time of the strength and activity of grace, we should do wrong; and our Lord Himself in His goodness makes us see the conduct that we should pursue; for at first, He puts such a pressure on the senses, they have no liberty. They only have to desire something in order to be deprived of it; God orders it thus that the senses may be drawn from their imperfect operation, to be confined within the heart; and in severing them outwardly, He binds them inwardly so gently, that it costs them little to be deprived of everything; they even find more pleasure in this deprivation than in the possession of all things. But when they are sufficiently purified, God, who wishes to draw the soul out of itself with a contrary movement, permits the senses to expand outwardly, which appears to the soul as

a great impurity. However, it has now happened seasonably, and to endeavour to order things otherwise, would be to purify ourselves in a different way from that which God desires, and therefore to defile ourselves anew.

This does not prevent our making mistakes in this outward development of the senses; but the confusion which it occasions us, and our fidelity in making use of it, is the furnace in which we are most quickly purified, by dying the soonest to ourselves. It is here also that we lose the esteem of men. They look on us with contempt, and say, "Are not these the persons whom we formerly admired? How are they become thus disfigured?" "Alas!" we reply, "look not upon me, because I am black" (Cant. i. 6). "It is the sun which has thus discoloured me." It is at this point that we suddenly enter the third degree, that of burial and decay.

CHAPTER VIII.

THIRD DEGREE OF THE PASSIVE WAY OF FAITH IN ITS
CONSUMMATION—CONSUMMATED STATE OF SPIRITUAL
DEATH—BURIAL—DECAY—ADVICE AS TO THE CONDUCT
OF PERSONS IN THESE CONDITIONS, WHICH ARE FOL-
LOWED BY A NEW LIFE.

THE torrent, as we have said, has passed through every imaginable vicissitude. It has been dashed against rocks ; indeed, its course has been but a succession of falls from rock to rock ; but it has always reappeared, and we have never seen it really lost. Now it begins to lose itself in gulf after gulf. Formerly it still had a course, though it was so precipitate, so confused, and so irregular ; but here it is engulfed with a yet greater precipitation in unsearchable depths. For a long time it disappears altogether from view, then we perceive it slightly, but more by hearing than by sight, and it only appears to be again precipitated in a deeper gulf. It falls from abyss to abyss, from precipice to precipice,

until at last it falls into the depths of the sea, where, losing all form, it is lost to be found no more, having become one with the sea itself. The soul, after many deaths, expires at last in the arms of Love; but it does not even perceive those arms. It has no sooner expired, than it loses all vital action, all desire, inclination, tendency, choice, repugnance, and aversion. As it draws near to death, it grows weaker; but its life, though languishing and agonising, is still life, and "while there is life there is hope," even though death be inevitable. The torrent must be buried out of sight.

O God! what is this? What were only precipices become abysses. The soul falls into a depth of misery from which there is no escape. At first this abyss is small, but the further the soul advances, the stronger does it appear, so that it goes from bad to worse; for it is to be remarked, that when we first enter a degree, there clings to us much that we have brought in with us, and at the end we already begin to feel symptoms of that which is to come. It is also noticeable that each degree contains within it an infinitude of others.

A man, after his death and before his burial, is still among the living: he still has the face of a man, though he is an object of terror; thus the soul, in the commencement of this degree, still bears some resemblance to what it was before; there remains in it a certain secret impression of God, as there remains in a dead body a certain animal heat which gradually leaves it. The soul still practises devotion and prayer, but this is soon taken away from it. It must lose not only all prayer, every gift of God, but God Himself to all appearance—that is, so far as He was possessed selfishly by the *ego*—and not lose Him for one, two, or three years, but for ever. All facility for good, all active virtue, are taken from it; it is left naked and despoiled of everything. The world, which formerly esteemed it so much, begins to fear it. Yet it is no visible sin which produces the contempt of men, but a powerlessness to practise its former good works with the same facility. Formerly whole days were spent in the visitation of the sick, often even against natural inclination; such works as these can be practised no longer.

The soul will soon be in an entire oblivion. Little

by little, it loses everything in such a degree, that it is altogether impoverished. The world tramples it under foot, and thinks no more of it. O poor soul! thou must see thyself treated thus, and see it with terror, without being able to prevent it. It must suffer itself to be buried, covered with earth, and trodden under foot by all men.

It is here that heavy crosses are borne, and all the heavier that they are believed to be merited. The soul begins to have a horror of itself. God casts it so far off, that He seems determined to abandon it for ever. Poor soul! thou must be patient, and remain in thy sepulchre. It is content to remain there, though in terrible suffering, because it sees no way of escape from it; and it sees, too, that it is its only fit place, all others being even sadder to it. It flees from men, knowing that they regard it with aversion. They look upon this forlorn Bride as an outcast, who has lost the grace of God, and who is only fit to be buried in the earth.

The heart endures its bitterness; but, alas! how sweet this state is even now, and how easy it would be to remain in the sepulchre, if it were not necessary

to decay ! The old man becomes gradually corrupted ; formerly there were weaknesses and failings, now the soul sees a depth of corruption of which it had hitherto been ignorant, for it could not imagine what were its self-esteem and selfishness. O God ! what horror this soul suffers in seeing itself thus decaying ! All troubles, the contempt and aversion of man, affect it no longer. It is even insensible to the deprivation of the Sun of Righteousness ; it knows that His light does not penetrate the tomb. But to feel its own corruption, that it cannot endure. What would it not rather suffer ? But it must experience, to the very depths of its being, what it is.

And yet, if I could decay without being seen by God, I should be content : what troubles me is the horror which I must cause Him by the sight of my corruption. But, poor desolate one ! what canst thou do ? It should suffice thee, one would think, to *bear* this corruption, without *loving* it : but now thou art not even sure that thou dost not desire it ! The soul is in darkness, without being able to judge whether its terrible thoughts proceed from itself or from the evil one.

It is no longer troubled at being cast off by God ; it is so conscious of its demerit, that it consents to the deprivation of the sensible presence of God. But it cannot endure the thought that the taint of its corruption reaches even to God. It does not wish to sin. Let me decay, is its cry, and find my home in the depths of hell, if only I may be kept free from sin. It no longer thinks of love, for it believes itself to be incapable of affection. It is, in its own opinion, worse than when it was in a state of nature, since it is in the state of corruption usual to the body deprived of life.

At length by degrees the soul becomes accustomed to its corruption : it feels it less, and finds it natural, except at certain times, when it is tried by various temptations, whose terrible impressions cause it much anguish. Ah, poor torrent ! wast thou not better off on the mountain-top than here ? Thou hadst then some slight corruption, it is true ; but now, though thou flowest rapidly, and nothing can stop thee, thou passest through such filthy places, so tainted with sulphur and saltpetre, that thou bearest away their odours with thee.

At last the soul is reduced to a state of nothingness, and has become like a person who does not exist, and never will exist ; it does nothing, either good or ill. Formerly it thought of itself, now it thinks no longer. All that is of grace is done as if it were of nature, and there is no longer either pain or pleasure. All that there is, is that its ashes remain as ashes, without the hope of ever being anything but ashes : it is utterly dead, and nothing affects it either from without or within—that is, it is no longer troubled by any sensible impressions. At last, reduced to nonentity, there is found in the ashes *a germ of immortality*, which lives beneath these ashes, and in due time will manifest its life. But the soul is in ignorance of it, and never expects to be revived or raised from the dead.

The faithfulness of the soul in this condition consists in letting itself be buried, crushed, trampled on, without making any more movement than a corpse, without seeking in any way to prevent its putrefaction. There are those who wish to apply balm to themselves. No, no ; leave yourselves as you are. You must know your corruption, and see

the infinite depth of depravity that is in you. To apply balm is but to endeavour by good works to hide your corruption. Oh, do it not! You will wrong yourselves. God can suffer you; why cannot you suffer yourselves? The soul, reduced to nothingness, must remain in it, without wishing to change its state; and it is then that the torrent loses itself in the sea, never to find itself in itself again, but to become one with the sea. It is then that this corpse feels without feeling, that it is gradually reanimated, and assumes *a new life*; but this is done so gradually that it seems like a dream. And this brings us to the last degree, which is the commencement of the *divine and truly inner life*, including numberless smaller degrees, and in which the advancement is infinite: just as this torrent can perpetually advance in the sea, and imbibe more of its nature, the longer it remains in it.

CHAPTER IX.

FOURTH DEGREE OF THE PASSIVE WAY OF FAITH, WHICH IS THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE DIVINE LIFE—TRANSITION FROM THE HUMAN STATE TO THE DIVINE, AND TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE SOUL IN GOD—DESCRIPTION OF THIS LIFE AND OF ITS PROPERTIES, GRADATIONS, IDENTITY, INDIFFERENCE—SENTIMENTS OF THE SOUL—ITS EXISTENCE IN GOD—ITS PEACE, ETC.—POWER AND VIEWS WITH REGARD TO OTHERS, TO ITSELF, TO ITS CONDITION, TO ITS ACTIONS, TO ITS WORDS, TO ITS FAULTS—MIND OF CHRIST—VARIOUS OBSERVATIONS.

WHEN the torrent begins to lose itself in the sea, it can easily be distinguished. Its movement is perceptible, until at length it gradually loses all form of its own, to take that of the sea. So the soul, leaving this degree, and beginning to lose itself, yet retains something of its own; but in a short time it loses all that it had peculiar to itself. The corpse which has been reduced to ashes is still dust and ashes; but if another person were to swallow those ashes, they would no

longer have an identity, but would form part of the person who had taken them. The soul hitherto, though dead and buried, has retained its own being; it is only in this degree that it is really taken out of itself.

All that has taken place up to this point has been in the individual capacity of the creature; but here the creature is taken out of his own capacity to receive an infinite capacity in God Himself. And as the torrent, when it enters the sea, loses its own being in such a way that it retains nothing of it, and takes that of the sea, or rather is taken out of itself to be lost in the sea; so this soul loses the human in order that it may lose itself in the divine, which becomes its being and its subsistence, not essentially, but mystically. Then this torrent possesses all the treasures of the sea, and is as glorious as it was formerly poor and miserable.

It is in the tomb that the soul begins to resume life, and the light enters insensibly. Then it can be truly said that "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung

up" (Matt. iv. 16). There is a beautiful figure of this resurrection in Ezekiel (chap. xxxvii.), where the dry bones gradually assume life: and then there is that other passage, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John v. 25). O you who are coming out of the sepulchre! you feel within yourselves a germ of life springing up little by little: you are quite astonished to find a secret strength taking possession of you: your ashes are reanimated: you feel yourselves to be in a new country. The poor soul, which only expected to remain at rest in its grave, receives an agreeable surprise. It does not know what to think: it supposes that the sun must have shed upon it a few scattered rays through some opening or chink, whose brightness will only last for a moment. It is still more astonished when it feels this secret vigour permeating its entire being, and finds that it gradually receives a new life, to lose it no more for ever, unless it be by the most flagrant unfaithfulness.

But this new life is not like the former one: it is a *life in God*. It is a perfect life. The soul

lives no longer and works no longer of itself, but *God* lives, acts, and operates in it (Gal. ii. 20); and this goes on increasing, so that it becomes perfect with God's perfection, rich with God's riches, and loving with God's love.

The soul sees now that whatever it owned formerly had been in its own possession: now it no longer possesses, but is possessed: it only takes a new life in order to lose it in God; or rather it only lives with the life of God; and as He is the principle of life, the soul can want nothing. What a gain it has made by all its losses! It has lost the created for the Creator, the nothing for the All in all. All things are given to it, not in itself, but in God; not to be possessed by itself, but to be possessed by God. Its riches are immense, for they are God Himself. It feels its capacity increasing day by day to immensity: every virtue is restored to it, but in God.

It must be remarked, that as it was only despoiled by degrees, so it is only enriched and vivified by degrees. The more it loses itself in God, the greater its capacity becomes; just as the

more the torrent loses itself in the sea, the more it is enlarged, having no other limits than those of the sea : it participates in all its properties. The soul becomes strong and firm : it has lost all means, but it has found the end. This divine life becomes quite natural to it. As it no longer feels itself, sees itself, or knows itself, so it no longer sees or understands or distinguishes anything of God as distinct or outside of itself. It is no longer conscious of love, or light, or knowledge ; it only knows that God is, and that it no longer lives except in God. All devotion is action, and all action is devotion : all is the same ; the soul is indifferent to all, for all is equally God. Formerly it was necessary to exercise virtue in order to perform virtuous works ; here all distinction of action is taken away, the actions having no virtue in themselves, but all being God, the meanest action equally with the greatest, provided it is in the order of God and at His time : for all that might be of the natural choice, and not in this order, would have another effect, leading the soul out of God by unfaithfulness. Not that it would be brought out of its degree or its

loss, but out of the divine plan, which makes all things one and all things God. So the soul is *indifferent* as to whether it be in one state or another, in one place or another: all is the same to it, and it lets itself be carried along naturally. It ceases to think, to wish, or to choose for itself; but remains content, without care or anxiety, no longer distinguishing its inner life to speak of it. Indeed it may be said not to possess one: it is no longer in itself; it is all in God. It is not necessary for it to shut itself up within itself; it does not hope to find anything there, and does not seek for it. If a person were altogether penetrated with the sea, having sea within and without, above and below, on every side, he would not prefer one place to another, all being the same to him. So the soul does not trouble itself to seek anything or to do anything; that is, of itself, by itself, or for itself. It remains as it is. But what does it do? Nothing—always nothing. It does what it is made to do, it suffers what it is made to suffer. Its peace is unchangeable, but always natural. It has, as it were, passed into a state of nature; and

yet how different from those altogether without God!

The difference is, that it is compelled to action by God without being conscious of it, whereas formerly it was nature that acted. It seems to itself to do neither right nor wrong, but it lives satisfied, peaceful, doing what it is made to do in a steady and resolute manner.

God alone is its guide; for at the time of its loss, it lost its own will. And if you were to ask what are its desires, it could not tell. It can choose for itself no longer: all desire is taken away, because, having found its centre, the heart loses all natural inclination, tendency, and activity, in the same way as it loses all repugnance and contrariety. The torrent has no longer either a declivity or a movement: it is in repose, and at its end.

But with what satisfaction is this soul satisfied? With the satisfaction of God, immense, general, without knowing or understanding what it is that satisfies it; for here all sentiments, tastes, views, particular opinions, however delicate they may be,

are taken from it: that certain vague, indefinable something, which formerly occupied without occupying it, is gone, and nothing remains to it. But this insensibility is very different to that of death, burial, and decay. That was a deprivation of life, a distaste, a separation, the powerlessness of the dying united with the insensibility of the dead; but this is an *elevation* above all these things, which does not remove them, but renders them useless. A dead man is deprived of all the functions of life by the powerlessness of death; but if he were to be raised gloriously, he would be full of life, without having the power to preserve it by means of the senses: and being placed above all means by virtue of his germ of immortality, he would no longer feel that which animated him, although he would know himself to be alive.

In this degree God cannot be tasted, seen, or felt, being no longer distinct from ourselves, but one with us. The soul has neither inclination nor taste for anything: in the period of death and burial it experienced this, but in a very different manner. Then it arose from distaste and powerlessness, but

now it is the effect of *plenitude* and *abundance*; just as if a person could live on air, he would be full without feeling his plenitude, or knowing in what way he had been satisfied; he would not be empty and unable to eat or to taste, but free from all necessity of eating by reason of his satisfaction, without knowing how the air, entering by all his pores, had penetrated equally at all parts.

The soul here is in God, as in the air which is natural to it, and it is no more sensible of its fulness than we are of the air we breathe. Yet it is full, and nothing is wanting to it; therefore all its desires are taken from it. Its peace is great, but not as it was before. Formerly it was an inanimate peace a certain sepulture, from which there sometimes escaped exhalations which troubled it. When it was reduced to ashes, it was at peace; but it was a barren peace, like that of a corpse, which would be at peace in the midst of the wildest storms of the sea: it would not feel them, and would not be troubled by them, its state of death rendering it insensible. But here the soul is raised, as it were, to a mountain-top, from which it sees the waves

rolling and tossing, without fearing their attacks; or rather it is at the bottom of the sea, where there is always tranquillity, even while the surface is agitated. The senses may suffer their sorrows, but at the centre there is always the same calm tranquillity, because He who possesses it is immutable.

This, of course, supposes the faithfulness of the soul; for in whatever state it may be, it is possible for it to recede and fall back into itself. But here the soul progresses infinitely in God; and it is possible for it to advance incessantly; just as, if the sea had no bottom, any one falling into it would sink to infinitude, and going down to greater and greater depths of the ocean, would discover more and more of its beauties and treasures. It is even thus with the soul whose home is in God.

But what must it do in order to be faithful to God? Nothing, and less than nothing. It must simply suffer itself to be possessed, acted upon, and moved without resistance, remaining in the state which is natural to it, waiting for what every moment may bring to it, and receiving it from Him, without either adding to or taking from it; letting itself be

led at all times and to any place, regardless of sight or reason, and without thinking of either ; letting itself go naturally into all things, without considering what would be best or most plausible ; remaining in the state of evenness and stability in which God has placed it, without being troubled to do anything ; but leaving to God the care of providing its opportunities, and of doing all for it ; not making definite acts of abandonment, but simply resting in the state of abandonment in which it already is, and which is natural to it.

The soul is unable to act in any way of itself without a consciousness of unfaithfulness. It possesses all things by having nothing. It finds a facility for every duty, for speaking and for acting, no longer in its own way, but in God's. Its faithfulness does not consist in ceasing from all activity, like one who is dead, but in doing nothing except by the principle which animates it. A soul in this state has no inclination of its own in anything, but lets itself go as it is led, and beyond that does nothing. It cannot speak of its state, for it does not see it ; though there is so much that is extraordinary, it is no longer

as it was in the former degrees, where the creature had some part in it, that which was in a great measure its own; but here the most wonderful things are perfectly natural, and are done without thought. It is the same principle that gives life to the soul which acts in it and through it. It has a sovereign power over the hearts of those around it, but not of itself. As nothing belongs to it, it can make no reserves; and if it can say nothing of a state so divine, it is not because it fears vanity, for that no longer exists; it is rather because what it has, while possessing nothing, passes all expression by its extreme simplicity and purity. Not that there are not many things which are but the accessories of this condition, and not the centre, of which it can easily speak. These accessories are like the crumbs which fall from that eternal feast of which the soul begins to partake in time; they are but the sparks which prove the existence of a furnace of fire and flame; but it is impossible to speak of the principle and the end, because only so much can be imparted as God is pleased to give at the moment to be either written or spoken.

It may be asked, Is the soul unconscious of its faults, or does it commit none? It does commit them, and is more conscious of them than ever, especially in the commencement of its new life. The faults committed are often more subtile and delicate than formerly. The soul knows them better, because its eyes are open; but it is not troubled by them, and can do nothing to rid itself of them. It is true that, when it has been guilty of unfaithfulness or sin, it is sensible of a certain cloud; but it passes over, without the soul itself doing anything to dispel it, or to cleanse itself; apart from which, any efforts it might make would be useless, and would only serve to increase its impurity; so that it would be deeply sensible that the second stain was worse than the first. It is not a question of returning to God, because a *return* presupposes a departure; and if we are in God, we have but to abide in Him; just as, when there arises a little cloud in the middle region of air, if the wind blows, it moves the clouds, but does not dissipate them; if, on the contrary, the sun shines forth, they will soon be dispelled. The more subtile and delicate

the clouds are, the more quickly they will be dissipated.

Oh! if we had sufficient fidelity never to look at ourselves, what progress might we not make! Our sights of ourselves resemble certain plants in the sea, which, just so long as their support lasts, prevent bodies from falling. If the branches are very delicate, the weight of the body forces them down, and we are only delayed for a moment; but if we look at ourselves willingly and long, we shall be delayed just so long a time as the look may occupy, and our loss will be great indeed. The defects of this state are certain light emotions or sights of self, which are born and die in a moment—certain winds of self, which pass over the calm sea, and cause ripples; but these faults are taken from us little by little, and continually become more delicate.

The soul, on leaving the tomb, finds itself, without knowing how, clothed with the *inclinations* of Christ; not by distinct and natural views of Him, but by its natural condition, finding these inclinations just when they are needed, without thinking of them; as a person who possesses a hidden treasure might find it

unexpectedly in the time of his need. The soul is surprised when, without having reflected on the mind and disposition of Christ, it finds them naturally implanted within it. These dispositions of Christ are lowliness, meekness, submission, and the other virtues which He possessed. The soul finds that all these are acting within it, but so easily, that they seem to have become natural to it. Its treasury is in God alone, where it can draw upon it ceaselessly in every time of need, without in any degree diminishing it. It is then that it really "puts on" Jesus Christ (Rom. xiii. 14); and it is henceforth He who acts, speaks, moves in the soul, the Lord Jesus Christ being its moving principle. Now those around it do not inconvenience it; the heart is enlarged to contain them. It desires neither activity nor retreat, but only to be each moment what God makes it to be.

As in this condition the soul is capable of infinite advancement, I leave those who are living in it to write of it, the light not being given me for the higher degrees, and my soul not being sufficiently advanced in God to see or to know them. All that I shall add is, that it is easy to see by the length of

the road necessary to be taken in order to arrive at God that the end is not so soon attained as we are apt to imagine, and that even the most spiritual and enlightened mistake the consummation of the *passive way of light and love* for the end of this one, when in reality it is but the commencement.

I must also remark, that what I have said touching the *mind* of Christ commences as soon as we enter the way of *naked faith*. Although the soul in the former degrees has no distinct sights of Christ, it has nevertheless a desire to be conformed to His image. It covets the cross, lowliness, poverty; then this desire is lost, and there remains a secret inclination for the same things, which continually deepens and simplifies, becoming every day more intimate and more hidden. But here the mind of Christ is the mind of the soul, natural and habitual to it, as something no longer distinct from itself, but as its own being and its own life; Christ exercising it without going out of the soul, and the soul exercising it with Him, in Him, without going out of Him; not like something distinct, which it knows, sees, attempts, practises, but as that which is natural to it. All the

actions of life, such as breathing, are done naturally, without thought, rule, or measure; and they are done unconsciously by the person who does them. It is thus with the mind of Christ in this degree, which continually develops, as the soul is more transformed in Him, and becomes more thoroughly one with Him.

But are there no crosses in this condition? As the soul is strong with the strength of God Himself, God lays upon it more crosses and heavier ones than before; but they are borne divinely. Formerly the cross charmed it; it was loved and cherished; now it is not thought of, but is suffered to go and come; and the cross itself becomes God, like all other things. This does not involve the cessation of suffering, but of the sorrow, the anxiety, the bitterness of suffering. It is true that the crosses are no longer crosses, but God. In the former stages, the cross is virtue, and is exalted more and more as the condition is more advanced: here the soul feels it to be God, like the rest; all that constitutes the life of this soul, all that it has, moment by moment, being God to it.

The outward appearance of these persons is quite ordinary, and nothing unusual is observed in them except by those who are capable of understanding them.

All is seen in God, and in its true light ; therefore this state is not subject to deception. There are no visions, revelations, ecstasies, ravishments, or translations. All these things do not belong to this state, which is above them all. This way is simple, pure, and naked, seeing nothing out of God ; and thus seeing all as God sees it, and with His eyes.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

MORE PARTICULAR DESCRIPTION OF SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIVINE RESURRECTION LIFE—TRUE LIBERTY AND THE RISEN LIFE, IN DISTINCTION FROM THAT WHICH IS NOT SO, OF WHICH JOB IS AN ILLUSTRATION—COMMENCEMENT OF THE APOSTOLIC LIFE—ITS FUNCTIONS AND ITS FRUITS—ON THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE, PARTICULARLY OF HUMILITY—BLESSEDNESS OF BEING LOST IN GOD—RARITY OF PERFECT ABANDONMENT—RAYS OF GLORY ESCAPED FROM WITHIN.

I OMITTED to say that this is where true liberty begins ; not, as some imagine, a liberty which necessitates idleness ; that would be imprisonment rather than liberty, fancying ourselves free because, having an aversion to our own works, we no longer practise them. The liberty of which I speak is of a different nature ; it does all things easily which God would have done, and the more easily in proportion

to the duration and the painfulness of the incapacity to do them which we have previously experienced. I confess I do not understand the resurrection state of certain Christians, who profess to have attained it, and who yet remain all their lives powerless and destitute ; for here the soul takes up a true life. The actions of a raised man are the actions of life ; and if the soul remain lifeless, I say that it may be dead or buried, but not risen. A risen soul should be able to perform without difficulty all the actions which it has performed in the past, only they would be done in God. Did not Lazarus, after his resurrection, exercise all the functions of life as formerly, and Jesus Christ after His resurrection was willing to eat and to converse with men. And so of those who believe themselves to be risen with Christ, and who are nevertheless stunted in their spiritual growth and incapable of devotion,—I say, that they do not possess a resurrection life, for there everything is restored to the soul a hundred-fold. There is a beautiful illustration of this in the case of Job, whose history I consider a mirror of the spiritual life. First God robbed him

of his wealth, which we may consider as setting forth gifts and graces ; then of his children ; this signifies the destruction of natural sensibilities, and of our own works, which are as our children and our most cherished possessions : then God deprived him of his health, which symbolises the loss of virtue ; then He touched his person, rendering him an object of horror and contempt. It even appears that this holy man was guilty of sin, and failed in resignation ; he was accused by his friends of being justly punished for his crimes ; there was no healthy part left in him. But after he had been brought down to the dunghill, and reduced as it were to a corpse, did not God restore everything to him, his wealth, his children, his health, and his life ?

It is the same with spiritual resurrection ; everything is restored, with a wonderful power to use it without being defiled by it, clinging to it without appropriating it as before. All is done in God, and things are used as though they were not used. It is here that true liberty and true life are found. "If we have been planted in the likeness of Christ's death, we shall be also in the likeness of

His resurrection" (Rom. vi. 5). Can there be freedom where there are powerlessness and restrictions? No; "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed," but with His liberty.

This is where true liberty begins. Nothing that God desires is difficult to us, or costs us anything; and if a person is called to preach, to instruct, &c., he does it with a marvellous facility, without the necessity of preparing a discourse, being well able to practise what Jesus commanded His disciples, "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" (Matt. x. 19; Luke xxi. 15). This is not given till after an experience of powerlessness; and the deeper that experience has been, the greater is the liberty. But it is useless to endeavour to force ourselves into this condition; for as God would not be the source, we should not realise the desired results. It may well be said of this risen life, that all good things are given with it. In this state, the soul cannot practise the virtues as virtues; it is not even conscious of them; but all the virtues

have become so habitual to it, that it practises them naturally, almost instinctively. When it hears others speak of deep humiliation, it is surprised to find that it experiences nothing of the kind ; and if it sought to humble itself, it would be astonished, as though it were guilty of unfaithfulness, and would even find it impossible, because the state of annihilation through which it has passed has placed it below all humiliation ; for in order to be humbled, we must *be something*, and nothingness cannot be brought lower ; its present state has placed it above all humility and all virtue by its transformation into God, so that its powerlessness arises both from its annihilation and its elevation. Those persons have nothing outwardly to distinguish them from others, unless it be that they do no harm to any one ; for, so far as the exterior is concerned, they are very ordinary, and therefore do not attract observation, but live in a state of quiet rest, free from all care and anxiety. They experience a deep joy, arising from the absence of all fear, or desire, or longing, so that nothing can disturb their repose or diminish their joy. David possessed this experience when

he said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid" (Ps. xxvii. 1).


A heart ravished with joy no longer looks at itself, nor thinks of itself; and its joy, though great, is not an object of contemplation. The soul is in a state of ravishment and ecstasy which cause no uneasiness, because God has enlarged its capacity almost to infinitude. Those ecstasies which cause the loss of consciousness are the effect of human imperfection, and are nevertheless the admiration of men. God is, as it were, drawing the soul out of itself that it may be lost in Him; but as it has neither sufficient purity nor strength to bear the process, it becomes necessary, either that God should cease thus to draw it, which involves the cessation of the ecstasy, or that nature should succumb and die, which not unfrequently happens. But in this resurrection life, the ecstasy lasts, not for a few hours only, but for ever, without either violence or variation, God having purified and strengthened the subject of it to the extent necessary to enable it to bear this glorious ravishment. It seems to me

that when God goes out of Himself, He creates an ecstasy,—but I dare not say this for fear of teaching an error. What I say then is, that the soul drawn out of itself experiences an inward ecstasy; but a happy one, because it is only drawn out of itself in order that it may be drowned and lost in God, quitting its own imperfections and its own limited thoughts to participate in those of God.

O happy nothingness! where does its blessedness end? O poverty-stricken, weary ones! how well ye are recompensed! O unutterable happiness! O soul! what a gain thou hast made in exchange for all thy losses! Couldst thou have believed, when thou wast lying in the dust, that what caused thee so much horror could have procured thee so great a happiness as that which thou now possessest? If it had been told thee, thou couldst not have credited it. Learn now by thine own experience how good it is to trust in God, and that those who put their confidence in Him shall never be confounded.

O abandonment! what gladness canst thou impart to the soul, and what progress it might have made if

it had found thee at first ; from how much weariness it might have been delivered if it had known how to let God work ! But, alas ! men are not willing to abandon themselves, and to trust only in God. Even those who appear to do it, and who think themselves well established in it, are only abandoned in imagination, and not in reality. They are willing to abandon themselves in one thing and not in another ; they wish to compromise with God, and to place a limit to what they will permit Him to do. They want to give themselves up, but on such and such conditions. No ; this is not abandonment. An entire and total abandonment excepts nothing, keeps back nothing, neither death, nor life, nor perfection, nor salvation, nor heaven, nor hell. O poor souls ! give yourselves up utterly in this abandonment ; you will get only happiness and blessing from it. Walk boldly on this stormy sea, relying on the word of Jesus, who has promised to take upon Himself the care of all those who will lose their own life, and abandon themselves to Him. But if you sink like Peter, ascribe it to the weakness of your faith. If we had the faith calmly, and without hesitation, to face all dangers, what good should we



not receive ! What do you fear, trembling heart ? You fear to lose yourself ? Alas ! for all that you are worth, what would that matter ? Yes, you will lose yourself if you have strength to abandon yourself to God, but you will be lost in Him. O happy loss ! I do not know how sufficiently to repeat it. Why can I not persuade every one to make this abandonment ? and why do men preach anything less ? Alas ! men are so blind that they regard all this as folly, as something fit for women and weak minds ; but for great minds it is too mean ; they must guide themselves by their own meagre share of wisdom. This path is unknown to them, because they are wise and prudent in themselves ; but it is revealed to babes, who can suffer self to be annihilated, and who are willing to be moved by God at His pleasure, leaving Him to do with them as He will, without resistance, without considering what others will say. Oh, how difficult it is to this proper prudence to become nothing both in its own eyes and in the sight of others ! Men say that their one object in life is to glorify God, while it is really their own glorification. But to be willing to be nothing in the sight of God, to live in an entire abandonment, in utter self-

despair, to give themselves to Him when they are the most discouraged, to leave themselves in His hands, and not to look at self when they are on the very edge of the abyss ; it is this that is so rare, and it is this which constitutes perfect abandonment. There sometimes occur in this life wonderful manifestations to the natural senses, but this is not usual ; it is like Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration.

CHAPTER II.

STABILITY, EXPERIENCES, ELEVATION, EXTREME PURITY, AND
PEACE OF THE SOUL IN THE CONDITION OF ABANDONMENT
—ALL IS PURELY GOD TO IT—FOR ITS LOST LIBERTY IT
FINDS THAT OF GOD—STATE IN WHICH ALL IS DIVINELY
SURE, EQUAL, AND INDIFFERENT.

THE soul having attained a divine state, is, as I have already said, an immovable rock, proof against all blows or shocks, unless it be when the Lord desires it to do something contrary to custom; then, if it does not yield to His first promptings, it has to suffer the pain of a constraint to which it can offer no resistance, and is compelled by a violence, which cannot be explained, to obey His will.

It is impossible to tell the strange proofs to which God subjects the hearts which are perfectly abandoned, and which offer no resistance to Him in anything; neither, if I could speak of them, should I be understood. All that I can say is, that He does not

leave them the shadow of anything that could be named, either in God or out of God. And He so raises them above all by the loss of all, that nothing less than God Himself, either in earth or heaven, can stop them. Nothing can harm them, because there is no longer anything hurtful for them, by reason of their union with God, which, in associating with sinners, contracts no defilement, because of its essential purity.

This is more real than I can express : the soul participates in the purity of God ; or rather, all natural purity having been annihilated, the purity of God alone exists in its nothingness ; but so truly, that the heart is in perfect ignorance of evil, and powerless to commit it, which does not however prevent the possibility of its falling ; but this seldom happens here, because the profound nothingness of the soul does not leave anything that can be appropriated to itself ; and it is appropriation alone which can cause sin, for that which no longer exists cannot sin.

The peace of those in this condition is so invariable and so profound, that nothing either in earth or hell can disturb it for a moment. The senses are still susceptible to suffering ; but when

they are overpowered by it, and cry out with the anguish, if they are questioned, or if they examine themselves, they will find nothing in themselves that suffers : in the midst of the greatest pain, they say that they suffer nothing, being unable to admit that they are suffering, because of the divine state of blessedness which reigns in the centre or supreme part.

And then there is such an entire and complete separation of the two parts, the inferior and the superior, that they live together like strangers ; and the most extraordinary trouble does not interrupt the perfect peace, tranquillity; joy, and rest of the superior part ; as the joy of the divine life does not prevent the suffering of the inferior.

If you wish to attribute any goodness to those who are thus transformed in God, they will object to it, not being able to find anything in themselves that can be named, affirmed, or heard. They are in a complete *negation*. It is this which causes the difference of terms and expressions employed by writers on this subject, who find a difficulty in making themselves understood, except by those whose experience accords with their own. Another

effect of this negation is, that the soul having lost all that was its own, God having substituted Himself, it can attribute nothing either to itself or to God; because it knows God only, of whom it can say nothing. Here all is God to the soul, because it is no longer a question of seeing all *in* God; for to see things in God is to distinguish them in Him. For instance, if I enter a room, I see all that is there in addition to the room itself, though it be placed within it; but if all could be transformed into the room itself, or else were taken out of it, I should see nothing but the room alone. All creatures, *celestial, terrestrial, or pure intelligences*, disappear and fade away, and there remains only God Himself, as He was before the creation. The soul sees only God everywhere; and all is God; not by thought, sight, or light, but by an identity of condition and a consummation of unity, which rendering it God by participation, without its being able to see itself, prevents it seeing anything anywhere; it can see no created being out of the Uncreated, the only uncreated One being all and in all.

Men would condemn such a state, saying it

makes us something less than the meanest insect ; and so it does, not by obstinacy and firmness of purpose, but by powerlessness to interfere with ourselves. You may ask one in this condition, "Who leads you to do such and such a thing? Is it God who has told you to do it, or has made known to you His will concerning it?" He will reply, "I know nothing, and I do not think of knowing anything: all is God and His will; and I no longer know what is meant by the will of God, because that will has become natural to me." "But why should you do this rather than that?" "I do not know: I let myself be guided by Him who draws me." "Why so?" "He draws me because I, being no longer anything, am carried along with God, and am drawn by Him *alone*. *He* goes hither and thither: *He* acts; and I am but an instrument, which I neither see nor regard. I have no longer a separate interest, because by the loss of myself I have lost all self-interest. Neither am I capable of giving any reason for my conduct, for I no longer have a conduct: yet I act infallibly so long as I have no other principle than that of the Infallible One."

And this blind abandonment is the permanent condition of the soul of which I speak ; because having become one with God, it can see nothing but God ; for having lost all separateness, self-possession, and distinction, it can no longer be abandoning itself, because, in order to abandon ourselves, we must do something, and have the power of disposing of ourselves.

The soul is in this condition "hidden *with Christ* in God" (Col. iii. 3) ; *mingled* with Him, as the river of which we have spoken is mingled with the sea, so that it can be separated no more. It has the ebb and flow of the sea, no longer by choice, will, and liberty, but by nature : the immense sea having absorbed its shallow limited waters, it participates in all the movements of the sea. It is the sea which bears it, and yet it is not borne, since it has lost its own being ; and having no other motion than that of the sea, it acts as the sea acts : not because it naturally possesses the same qualities, but because, having lost all its natural qualities, it has no others but those of the sea, without having the power of ever

being anything but sea. It is not, as I have said, that it does not so retain its own nature, that, if God so willed it, in a moment it could be separated from the sea; but He does not do this. Neither does it lose the nature of the creature; and God could, if He pleased, cast it off from His divine bosom: but He does not do it, and the creature acts as it were divinely.

But it will be said that by this theory I deprive man of his liberty. Not so; he is no longer free except by an excess of liberty, because he has lost freely all created liberty. He participates in the uncreated freedom, which is not contracted, bounded, limited by anything; and the soul's liberty is so great, so broad, that the whole earth appears to it as a speck, to which it is not confined. It is free to do all and to do nothing. There is no state or condition to which it cannot accommodate itself; it can do all things, and yet takes no part in them. O glorious state! who can describe thee, and what hast thou to fear or to apprehend? O Paul! thou couldst say, "who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" "I am persuaded,"

says the great apostle, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39). Now these words, "I am persuaded," exclude all doubt. But what was the foundation of Paul's assurance? It was in the infallibility of God alone. The epistles of this great apostle, this mystical teacher, are often read, but seldom understood; yet all the mystic way, its commencement, its progress, its end, are described by St Paul, and even the divine life; but few are able to understand it, and those to whom the light is given see it all there clearer than the day.

Ah! if those who find it so difficult to leave themselves to God could only experience this, they would confess that though the way might be arduous, a single day of this life was a sufficient recompense for years of trouble. But by what means does God bring the soul here? By ways altogether opposed to natural wisdom and imagina-

tion. He builds up by casting down ; He gives life by killing. Oh ! if I could tell what He does, and the strange means which He uses to bring us here. But silence ! men are not able to hear it ; those who have experienced it know what it is. Here there is no need of place or time ; all is alike, all places are good ; and wherever the order of God may take us, it is well, because all means are useless and infinitely surpassed : when we have reached the end, there is nothing left to wish for.

Here all is God : God is everywhere and in everything, and therefore to the soul all is the same. Its religion is God Himself, always the same, never interrupted ; and if sometimes God pours some stream of His glory upon its natural powers and sensibilities, it has no effect upon the centre, which is always the same. The soul is indifferent either to solitude or a crowd : it no longer looks forward to deliverance from the body in order that it may be united to God. It is now not only united, but transformed, changed into the Object of its love, which causes it no longer to think of loving ; for it loves God with His own love, and naturally, though not inamissibly.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH IS EXPLAINED BY A COMPARISON THAT WHICH CONCERNS PERFECT UNION OR DEIFORMITY—SECRETS OF GOD REVEALED TO HIS HIDDEN ONES, AND BY THEM TO OTHERS—PERMANENCE AND PROGRESS OF THIS CONDITION, THOUGH VARIABLE—NATURAL CAPACITY MUST BE LOST—THE PARTICIPATED CAPACITY OF GOD BY TRANSFORMATION GLOWS INFINITELY.

A SIMILITUDE occurs to my mind which appears very appropriate to this subject : it is that of grain. First it is separated from the husk, which sets forth conversion and separation from sin : when the grain is separate and pure, it must be ground (by affliction, crosses, sickness, &c.) ; when it is thus bruised and reduced to flour, there must still be taken from it, not that which is impure, for this is gone, but all that is coarse, that is, the bran ; and when there is nothing left but the fine flour, then it is made into bread for food. It appears as though the flour were soiled, blackened, and blighted ;

that its delicacy and whiteness were taken from it, in order that it may be made into a paste which is far less beautiful than the flour. Lastly, this paste is exposed to the heat of the fire. Now this is precisely what happens to the soul of which I have been speaking. But after the bread is baked, it is fit for the mouth of the king, who not only unites it to himself by contact with it, but eats it, digests it, consumes it, and annihilates it, that it may enter into his composition, and become part of himself.

You will observe that though the bread has been eaten by the king, which is the greatest honour it can receive, and is its end, yet it cannot be changed into his substance unless it be annihilated by digestion, losing all its natural form and quality. Oh, how well this sets forth all the conditions of the soul; that of union being very different to that of transformation, in which the soul, in order to become one with God, transformed and changed into Him, must not only be eaten, but digested, that, after having lost all that was its own, it may become one with God Himself: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in

me, and I in Thee ; that they also may be one in us, I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John xvii. 21, 23). "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17).

This state is very little known, therefore it is not spoken of. O state of life ! how narrow is the way which leadeth unto thee ! O love the most pure of all, because Thou art God Himself ! O love immense and independent, which nothing can limit or straiten !

Yet these people appear quite common, as I have said, because they have nothing outwardly to distinguish them, unless it be an infinite freedom, which is often scandalised by those who are limited and confined within themselves, to whom, as they see nothing better than they have themselves, all that is different to what they possess appears evil. But the holiness of these simple and innocent ones whom they despise is a holiness incomparably more eminent than all which they consider holy, because their own works, though performed with such strictness, have no more strength than the principle in which they originate, which is always the effort, though raised

and ennobled, of a weak creature ; but those who are consummated in the divine union act in God by a principle of infinite strength ; and thus their smallest actions are more agreeable to God than the multitude of heroic deeds achieved by others, which appear so great in the sight of men. Therefore those in this degree do not seek for great things to do, resting contented with being what God makes them at each moment. These do more, without doing anything, for the conversion of a kingdom, than five hundred preachers who have not attained this condition.

God sometimes, however, permits these people to be known, though not fully. Many people apply to them for instruction, to whom they communicate a vivifying principle, by means of which many more are won to Christ ; but this is done, without care or anxiety, by pure Providence. If people only knew the glory which is rendered to God by such as these, who are scorned by the world, they would be astonished ; for it is they who render to God a glory worthy of Himself ; because God, acting as God within them, brings into them a glory worthy of Him.

Oh, how many Christians, quite seraphic in appear-

ance, are far from this ! But in this condition, as in all others, there are souls more or less divine. God hides them in His bosom, and under the veil of a most common life, so that they may be known to Him alone, though they are His delight. Here the secrets of God, in Himself and in the hearts of those in whom He dwells, are revealed ; not by word, sight, or light, but by the science of God, which abides in Him ; and when such people have to write or speak, they are themselves astonished to find that all flows from a divine centre, without their having been aware that they possessed such treasures. They find themselves in a profound science, without memory or recollection ; like an inestimable treasure, which is unobserved until there is a necessity for its manifestation ; and it is in the manifestation to others that they find the revelation to themselves. When they write, they are astonished to find themselves writing of things with which they neither knew nor believed themselves to be acquainted ; although, as they write, they cannot doubt their apprehension of them. It is not so with other Christians ; their light precedes their experience, as a

person sees from afar the things which he does not possess, and describes what he has seen, known, heard, &c. But these are persons who hold a treasure within themselves, which they do not see until after the manifestation, although it is in their possession.

Yet, after all, this does not well express the idea which I wish to convey. God is in this soul; or rather the soul no longer exists; it no longer acts, but God acts, and it is the instrument. God includes all treasures in Himself, and manifests them through this soul to others; and thus, as it draws them from its centre, it becomes aware of their presence, though it had never reflected upon them before. I am sure that any who have attained this degree will enter into my meaning, and will easily distinguish the difference between the states I have described. Those whom I mentioned first, see things and enjoy them as we enjoy the sun; but the others have become one with the sun itself, which does not enjoy nor reflect upon its own light. This condition is permanent, and its only vicissitude, so far as its centre is concerned, is a greater

advancement in God: and as God is infinite, He can continually make the soul more divine by enlarging its capacity, as the water of which we have spoken expands in proportion as it is lost in the sea, with which it mingles incessantly without ever leaving it. It is the same with these souls. All who are in this degree have God, but some more and some less fully. They are all full, but all do not possess an equal plenitude. A little vase when full is as truly filled as a larger one, yet it does not contain an equal quantity. So all these souls are filled with the fulness of God, but it is according to their receptive capacity, which capacity God continually enlarges. Therefore the longer Christians live in this divine condition, the more they expand, and their capacity becomes continually more immense, without anything being left for them to do or desire; for they always possess God in His fulness, and He never leaves an empty corner in their hearts. As they grow and enlarge, He fills them with Himself, as we see with the air. A small room is full of air, but a large one contains more. If you continually increase the size of a

room, in the same proportion the air will enter, infallibly though imperceptibly: and thus, without changing its state or disposition, and without any new sensation, the soul increases in capacity and in plenitude. But this growing capacity can only be received in a state of nothingness, because in any other condition there is an opposition to growth.

It may be well here to explain what may appear a contradiction, when I say, that the soul must be brought to nothing in order to pass into God, and that it must lose all that is its own; and yet I speak of capacity which it retains.

There are two capacities. One is natural to the creature, and this is narrow and limited: when it is purified, it is fitted to receive the gifts of God, but not God Himself; because what we receive within us must of necessity be less than ourselves, as that which is enclosed in a vase must be of less extent, though it may be of greater value, than the vase which contains it.

But the capacity of which I speak here is a capacity to extend and to lose itself more and more in God, after the soul has lost its appropriation,

which confined it to itself ; and this capacity being no longer restricted nor limited, because its annihilation has deprived it of all form, disposes the soul to flow into God, so that it loses itself, and flows into Him who is beyond comprehension. The more it is lost in Him, the more it develops and becomes immense, participating in His perfections, and being more and more transformed in Him, as water in communication with its source continually mingles with it. God, being our original source, has created us with a nature fit to be united, transformed, and made one with Himself.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST MOVEMENTS OF THESE SOULS ARE DIVINE—THEIR SUFFERINGS ARE NOT BY REFLECTION, BUT BY IMPRESSION—GREATNESS OF THESE SUFFERINGS, WHICH, HOWEVER, DO NOT VARY THEIR REST OR CONTENTMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR DEIFICATION, WHICH PROGRESSES INFINITELY, BUT GRADUALLY—THEIR PEACE DISTURBED NEITHER BY GOOD NOR EVIL, AS GOD IS NEITHER TROUBLED NOR DISTURBED BY THE SIGHT OF MAN'S SIN, ALL THINGS CONTRIBUTING TO HIS GLORY.

THE soul has now nothing to do but to remain as it is, and to follow without resistance all the movements of its Guide. All its movements are of God, and He guides it infallibly. It is not thus in the inferior conditions, unless it be when the soul begins to taste of the centre ; but then it is not so infallible, and they would be deceived who applied this rule to any but the most advanced state.

It is the duty of this soul to follow blindly with reflection all the movings of God. Here all reflec-

tion is banished, and the soul would find a difficulty in indulging in it, even if it desired to do so. But as by an effort it might accomplish it, this habit should be scrupulously avoided; because reflection alone has the power of leading man to enter into himself, and of drawing him out of God. Now, I say, that if man does not go out of God he will never sin; and if he sin, it is because he has gone out of Him, which can only be the effect of appropriation; and the soul can only take itself back from its abandonment by reflex action, which would be to it a hell similar to that into which the great angel fell when, looking with complacency upon himself, and preferring himself to God, he became a devil. And this state would be more terrible as that which had been previously attained was more advanced.

It will be objected that suffering is impossible in this condition, not only as to the centre, but also as to the senses, because in order to suffering there must be reflex action, and it is reflection which constitutes the principal and the most painful part of suffering. All this is true in a certain sense; and as it is a fact that souls far less advanced than these

suffer sometimes by reflection, sometimes by impression, I maintain that it is also true that those in this degree cannot suffer otherwise than by impression. This does not imply that sorrow may not be unlimited, and far more intense than that which is reflected, as the burning of one brought into actual contact with fire would be much more severe than that of one who is burned by the reflection of fire. It will be said, But God can teach them by means of reflection how to suffer. God will not make use of reflection for this end. He can show them in a moment what they have to suffer by a direct view, and not by a reflected one, as those in heaven see in God that which is in Him, and that which passes out from Him to His creatures, without looking at these things or reflecting upon them, but remaining absorbed and lost in God. It is this which deceives so many spiritually-minded people, who imagine that nothing can be either known or suffered but by reflection. On the contrary, this kind of knowledge and suffering is very slight compared to that which is imparted in other ways.

All such-suffering as can be distinguished and known, though expressed in such exaggerated terms,

does not equal that of those who do not know their suffering, and cannot admit that they do suffer, because of the great separation between the two parts. It is true that they suffer extreme pain ; it is true that they suffer nothing, and that they are in a state of perfect contentment.

I believe that, if such a soul were taken to hell, it would suffer all the cruel tortures of its fate in a complete contentment, because of the beatitude of its transformed centre ; and this is the cause of the indifference which they feel towards all conditions.

As I have said, this does not prevent their experiencing the extremity of suffering, as the extremity of suffering does not hinder their perfect happiness. Those who have experienced it will be well able to understand me.

It is not here as in the passive state of love. There the soul is filled with a love of suffering and of the good pleasure of God : here it is a loss of the will in God by a state of deification, where all is God without its being recognised as such. The soul is established by its condition in its sovereign, unchangeable good. It is in a perfect

beatitude, where nothing can cross its perfect happiness, which is rendered its permanent condition; for many possess it temporarily, or know it temporarily, before it becomes their permanent condition. God gives first the knowledge of the condition, then a desire for it; then He gives it confusedly and indistinctly; and lastly, He makes it a normal condition, and establishes the soul in it for ever.

It will be said that when once the soul is established in this condition, nothing more can be done for it. It is just the reverse: there is always an infinitude to be done on the part of God, not on that of the creature. God does not make the life divine all at once, but by degrees. Then, as I have said, He enlarges the capacity of the soul, and can continually deify it more and more, God being an unfathomable depth.

O Lord! "how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee!" (Ps. xxxi. 19).

It was the sight of this state of blessedness which elicited such frequent exclamations from David after he had been purified from sin.

But in conclusion, I say that these persons cannot be troubled by sin, because, although they hate it infinitely, they no longer suffer from it, seeing it as God sees it; and though, if it were necessary, they would give their lives to prevent the commission of a single sin, if God so willed it, they are without action, without desire, without inclination, without choice, without impatience, in a state of complete death, seeing things only as God sees them, and judging them only with God's judgment.

THE END.

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