

A Short and Very Easy Method of Prayer

by Madame Guyon

Madame Guyon's sermon emphasizes the simplicity and accessibility of prayer as a means to connect with God and attain spiritual perfection.

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Madame Guyon expounds on the profound nature of prayer, emphasizing the importance of inward silence, surrendering to God's will, and allowing the divine Spirit to guide and move the soul. She highlights the active yet tranquil state of the soul when it is fully dependent on God's Spirit, leading to a noble and peaceful activity that surpasses all self-efforts. The prayer of silence is described as a warm effusion of love, melting the soul and causing it to ascend to God, offering a fragrant incense of adoration. The soul is encouraged to abandon self-interest, embrace annihilation, and allow God to act freely within, leading to a state of unity and simplicity in God's image.

Transcript

THIS little treatise, conceived in great simplicity, was not originally intended for publication. It was written for a few individuals, who were desirous of loving God with all their heart. Many, however, because of the profit they received in reading the manuscript, wished to obtain copies, and, on this account alone, it was committed to the press.

It still remains in its original simplicity. It contains no censure on the various divine leadings of others; on the contrary, it enforces the received teachings. The whole is submitted to the judgment of the learned and experienced; requesting them, however, not to stop at the surface, but to enter into the main design of the author, which is to induce the whole world to love God, and to serve Him with comfort and success, in a simple and easy manner, adapted to those little ones who are unqualified for learned and deep researches, but who earnestly desire to be truly devoted to God.

An unprejudiced reader will find, hidden under the most common expressions, a secret unction, which will excite him to seek after that happiness which all should wish to enjoy.

In asserting that perfection is easily attained, the word facility, is used; because God is, indeed found with facility, when we seek Him within ourselves. But some, perhaps, may urge that passage in St. John "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me," (vii. 34); this apparent difficulty, however, is removed by another passage, where He, who cannot contradict himself, has said to all, "Seek and ye shall find," (Matt. vii. 7). It

is true, indeed, that he who would seek God, and is yet unwilling to forsake his sins, shall not find him, because he seeks Him where He is not; and, therefore, it is added, "Ye shall die in your sins." But he, who will take some trouble to seek God in his own heart, and sincerely forsake his sin, that he may draw near unto Him, shall infallibly find Him.

A life of piety appears so frightful to many, and prayer of such difficult attainment, that they are discouraged from taking a single step towards it. But as the apprehended difficulty of an undertaking often causes despair of succeeding and reluctance in commencing, so its desirableness, and the idea that it is easy to accomplish, induce us to enter upon its pursuit with pleasure, and to pursue it with vigor. The advantages and facility of this way are therefore set forth in the following treatise.

O were we once persuaded of the goodness of God toward his poor creatures, and of his desire to communicate Himself to them, we should not create ideal monsters, nor so easily despair of obtaining that good which He is so earnest to bestow: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall He not, with him, also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32). It needs only a little courage and perseverance; we have enough of both in our temporal concerns, but none at all in the one thing needful, (Luke x. 42).

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

Beloved reader, pursue this little tract with a sincere and candid spirit, in lowliness of mind, and not with an inclination to criticize, and you will not fail to reap profit from it. It was written with a desire that you might wholly devote yourself to God; receive it then with a like desire: for it has no other design than to invite the simple and the child-like to approach their father, who delights in the humble confidence of his children, and is greatly grieved at their distrust. With a sincere desire, therefore, for your salvation, seek nothing from the unpretending method here proposed, but the love of God, and you shall assuredly obtain it.

Without setting up our opinions above those of others, we mean only with sincerity to declare, from our own experience and the experience of others, the happy effects produced by thus simply following after the Lord.

As this treatise was intended only to instruct in prayer, nothing is said of many things which we esteem, because they do not immediately relate to our main subject. It is, however, beyond a doubt, that nothing will be found herein to offend, provided it be read in the spirit with which it was written. And it is still more certain, that those who in right earnest make trial of the way, will find we have written the truth.

It is Thou alone, O holy Jesus, who lovest simplicity and innocence, "and whose delight is to dwell with the children of men," (Prov. viii. 31), with those who are, indeed, willing to become "little children," (Matt. xviii. 3); it is Thou alone, who canst render this little work of any value, by imprinting it on the heart, and leading those who read it to seek Thee within themselves, where Thou reposest as in the manger, waiting to receive proofs of their love, and to give them testimony of thine. They lose these advantages by their own fault. But it belongeth unto thee, O child Almighty! uncreated Love! silent and all-containing Word! to make thyself loved, enjoyed and understood. Thou canst do it; and I know Thou wilt do it by this little work, which belongeth entirely to Thee, proceedeth wholly from Thee, and tendeth only to Thee!

CHAPTER I.

THE PRAYER OF THE HEART.

ALL are capable of prayer, and it is a dreadful misfortune that almost all the world have conceived the idea that they are not called to prayer. We are all called to prayer, as we are all called to salvation.

PRAYER is nothing but the application of the heart to God, and the internal exercise of love. St. Paul has enjoined us to "pray without ceasing;" (1 Thess. v. 17,) and our Lord bids us watch and pray, (Mark xiii. 33,37): all therefore may, and all ought to practise prayer. I grant that meditation is attainable but by few, for few are capable of it; and therefore, my beloved brethren who are athirst for salvation, meditative prayer is not the prayer which God requires of you, nor which we would recommend.

2. Let all pray: you should live by prayer, as you should live by love. "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that ye may be rich." (Rev. iii. 18.) This is very easily obtained, much more easily than you can conceive.

Come all ye that are athirst to the living waters, nor lose your precious moments in hewing out cisterns that will hold no water. (John vii. 37; Jer. ii. 13.) Come ye famishing souls, who find nought to satisfy you; come, and ye shall be filled! Come, ye poor afflicted ones, bending beneath your load of wretchedness and pain, and ye shall be consoled! Come, ye sick, to your physician, and be not fearful of approaching him because ye are filled with diseases; show them, and they shall be healed!

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

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

3. All who are desirous of prayer, may easily pray, enabled by those ordinary graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit which are common to all men.

PRAYER is the key to perfection, and the sovereign good; it is the means of delivering us from every vice, and obtaining us every virtue; for the one great means of becoming perfect, is to walk in the presence of God. He himself hath said, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." (Gen. xvii. 1.) It is by prayer alone that we are brought into his presence, and maintained in it without interruption.

4. You must, then, learn a species of prayer which may be exercised at all times; which does not obstruct outward employments; which may be equally practised by princes, kings, prelates, priests and magistrates, soldiers and children, tradesmen, laborers, women, and sick persons; it is not the prayer of the head, but OF THE HEART.

It is not a prayer of the understanding alone, for the mind of man is so limited in its operations that it can have but one object at a time; but it is the PRAYER OF THE HEART which is not interrupted by the exercises of reason. Nothing can interrupt this prayer but disordered affections; and when once we have enjoyed God, and the sweetness of his love, we shall find it impossible to relish aught but himself.

5. Nothing is so easily obtained as the possession and enjoyment of God. He is more present to us than we are to ourselves. He is more desirous of giving Himself to us than we are to possess Him; we only need to know how to seek Him, and the way is easier and more natural to us than breathing.

Ah! ye who think yourselves so dull and fit for nothing, by prayer you may live on God himself with less difficulty or interruption than you live on the vital air. Will it not then be highly sinful to neglect prayer? But doubtless you will not, when you have learnt the method, which is the easiest in the world.

C H A P T E R II.

THE FIRST DEGREE OF PRAYER: MEDITATION.

THERE are two ways of introducing a soul into prayer, which should be pursued for some time; the one is meditation, the other is reading accompanied by meditation.

Meditative reading is the choosing some important practical or speculative truth, always preferring the practical, and proceeding thus: whatever truth you have chosen, read only a small portion of it, endeavoring to taste and digest it, to extract the essence and substance of it, and proceed no farther while any savor or relish remains in the passage: then take up your book again, and proceed as before, seldom reading more than half a page at a time.

It is not the quantity that is read, but the manner of reading, that yields us profit. Those who read fast, reap no more advantage, than a bee would by only skimming over the surface of the flower, instead of waiting to penetrate into it, and extract its sweets. Much reading is rather for scholastic subjects, than divine truths; to receive profit from spiritual books, we must read as I have described; and I am certain that if that method were pursued, we should become gradually habituated to prayer by our reading, and more fully disposed for its exercise.

2. Meditation, which is the other method, is to be practised at an appropriated season, and not in the time of reading. I believe that the best manner of meditating is as follows:

When by an act of lively faith, you are placed in the presence of God, read some truth wherein there is substance; pause gently thereon, not to employ the reason, but merely to fix the mind; observing that the principal exercise should ever be the presence of God, and that the subject, therefore, should rather serve to stay the mind, than exercise it in reasoning.

Then let a lively faith in God immediately present in our inmost souls, produce an eager sinking into ourselves, restraining all our senses from wandering abroad: this serves to extricate us, in the first instance, from numerous distractions, to remove us far from external objects, and to bring us nigh to God, who is only to be found in our inmost centre, which is the Holy of Holies wherein he dwells. He has even promised to come and make his abode with him that doeth his will. (John xiv. 23.) St. Augustine blames himself for the time he had lost in not having sought God, from the first, in this manner of prayer.

3. When we are thus fully entered into ourselves, and warmly penetrated throughout with a lively sense of the Divine presence; when the senses are all recollected, and withdrawn from the circumference to the centre, and the soul is sweetly and silently employed on the truths we have read, not in reasoning, but in feeding thereon, and animating the will by affection, rather than fatiguing the understanding by study; when, I say, the affections are in this state, (which, however difficult it may appear at first, is, as I shall hereafter show, easily attainable,) we must allow them sweetly to repose, and, as it were, swallow what

they have tasted.

For as a person may enjoy the flavor of the finest viands in mastication, yet receive no nourishment from them, if he does not cease the action and swallow the food; so when our affections are enkindled, if we endeavor to stir them up yet more, we extinguish the flame, and the soul is deprived of its nourishment. We should, therefore, in a repose of love, full of respect and confidence, swallow the blessed food we have received. This method is highly necessary, and will advance the soul more in a short time, than any other in years.

4. But as I have said that our direct and principal exercise should consist in the contemplation of the Divine presence, we should be exceedingly diligent in recalling our dissipated senses, as the most easy method of overcoming distractions; for a direct contest only serves to irritate and augment them; whereas, by sinking within, under a view by faith, of a present God, and simply recollecting ourselves, we wage insensibly a very successful, though indirect war with them.

It is proper here to caution beginners against wandering from truth to truth, and from subject to subject; the right way to penetrate every divine truth, to enjoy its full relish, and to imprint it on the heart, is to dwell upon it whilst its savor continues.

Though recollection is difficult in the beginning, from the habit the soul has acquired of being always abroad, yet, when by the violence it has done itself, it becomes a little accustomed to it, the process is soon rendered perfectly easy; and this partly from the force of habit, and partly because God, whose one will towards his creatures is to communicate himself to them, imparts abundant grace, and an experimental enjoyment of his presence, which very much facilitate it.

C H A P T E R III.

THE METHOD OF PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT READ.

THOSE who cannot read books, are not, on that account, excluded from prayer. The great book which teaches all things, and which is written all over, within and without, is Jesus Christ himself.

The method they should practice is this: they should first learn this fundamental truth, that "the kingdom of God is within them," (Luke xvii. 21,) and that it must be sought there only.

It is as incumbent on the clergy to instruct their parishioners in prayer, as in their catechism. It is true they tell them the end of their creation; but they do not give them sufficient instructions how they may attain it.

They should be taught to begin by an act of profound adoration and annihilation before God, and closing the corporeal eyes, endeavor to open those of the soul; they should then collect themselves inwardly, and by a lively faith in God, as dwelling within them, pierce into the divine presence; not suffering the senses to wander abroad, but holding them as much as may be in subjection.

2. They should then repeat the Lord's prayer in their native tongue; pondering a little upon the meaning of the words, and the infinite willingness of that God who dwells within them to become, indeed, "their father." In this state let them pour out their wants before him; and when they have pronounced the word, "father," remain a few moments in a reverential silence, waiting to have the will of this their heavenly Father made manifest to them.

Again, the Christian, beholding himself in the state of a feeble child, soiled and sorely bruised by repeated falls, destitute of strength to stand, or of power to cleanse himself, should lay his deplorable situation open to his Father's view in humble confusion; occasionally intermingling a word or two of love and grief, and then again sinking into silence before Him. Then, continuing the Lord's prayer, let him beseech this King of Glory to reign in him, abandoning himself to God, that He may do it, and acknowledging his right to rule over him.

If they feel an inclination to peace and silence, let them not continue the words of the prayer so long as this sensation holds; and when it subsides, let them go on with the second petition, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!" upon which let these humble supplicants beseech God to accomplish in them, and by them, all his will, and let them surrender their hearts and freedom into his hands, to be disposed of as He pleases. When they find that the will should be employed in loving, they will desire to love, and will implore Him for his LOVE; but all this will take place sweetly and peacefully: and so of the rest of the prayer, in which the clergy may instruct them.

But they should not burthen themselves with frequent repetitions of set forms, or studied prayers; for the Lord's prayer once repeated as I have just described, will produce abundant fruit.

3. At other times, they may place themselves as sheep before their Shepherd, looking up to Him for their true food: O divine Shepherd, Thou feedest thy flock with Thyself, and art indeed their daily bread. They may also represent to him the necessities of their families: but let all be done from this principal and one great view of faith, that God is within them.

All our imaginations of God amount to nothing; a lively faith in his presence is sufficient. For we must not form any image of the Deity, though we may of Jesus Christ, beholding him in his birth, or his crucifixion, or in some other state or mystery, provided the soul always seeks Him in its own centre.

On other occasions, we may look to him as a physician, and present for his healing virtue all our maladies; but always without perturbation, and with pauses from time to time, that the silence, being mingled with action, may be gradually extended, and our own exertion lessened; till at length, by continually yielding to God's operations, He gains the complete ascendancy, as shall be hereafter explained.

4. When the divine presence is granted us, and we gradually begin to relish silence and repose, this experimental enjoyment of the presence of God introduces the soul into the second degree of prayer, which, by proceeding in the manner I have described, is attainable as well by the illiterate as by the learned; some privileged souls, indeed, are favored with it even from the beginning.

C H A P T E R I V.

THE PRAYER OF SIMPLICITY.

SOME call the second degree of prayer Contemplation, The prayer of faith and stillness, and others call it The prayer of simplicity. I shall here use this latter appellation, as being more just than that of contemplation, which implies a more advanced state than that I am now treating of.

When the soul has been for some time exercised in the way I have mentioned, it gradually finds that it is enabled to approach God with facility; that recollection is attended with much less difficulty, and that prayer becomes easy, sweet, and delightful: it recognizes that this is the true way of finding God, and feels that " his name is as ointment poured forth." (Cant. i. 3.) The method must now be altered, and that which I

describe must be pursued with courage and fidelity, without being disturbed at the difficulties we may encounter in the way.

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

But if, at the beginning, in forming the act of faith, it feels some little pleasing sense of the Divine presence, let it remain there without being troubled for a subject, and proceed no farther, but carefully cherish this sensation while it continues. When it abates, it may excite the will by some tender affection; and if, by the first moving thereof, it finds itself reinstated in sweet peace, let it there remain; the fire must be gently fanned, but as soon as it is kindled, we must cease our efforts, lest we extinguish it by our activity.

3. I would warmly recommend to all, never to finish prayer without remaining some little time afterward in a respectful silence. It is also of the greatest importance for the soul to go to prayer with courage, and to bring with it such a pure and disinterested love, as seeks nothing from God, but to please Him, and to do his will; for a servant who only proportions his diligence to his hope of reward, is unworthy of any recompense. Go then to prayer, not desiring to enjoy spiritual delights, but to be just as it pleases God; this will preserve your spirit tranquil in aridities as well as in consolation, and prevent your being surprised at the apparent repulses or absence of God.

C H A P T E R V.

ARIDITIES TO BE BORNE IN LOVE.

THOUGH God has no other desire than to impart Himself to the loving soul that seeks Him, yet He frequently conceals Himself from it, that it may be roused from sloth, and impelled to seek Him with fidelity and love. But with what abundant goodness does He recompense the faithfulness of his beloved! And how often are these apparent withdrawals of Himself succeeded by the caresses of love!

At these seasons we are apt to believe that it proves our fidelity, and evinces a greater ardor of affection to seek Him by an exertion of our own strength and activity; or that such a course will induce Him the more speedily to revisit us. No, dear souls, believe me, this is not the best way in this degree of prayer; with patient love, with self-abasement and humiliation, with the reiterated breathings of an ardent but peaceful affection, and with silence full of veneration, you must await the return of the Beloved.

2. Thus only can you demonstrate that it is HIMSELF alone, and his good pleasure, that you seek; and not the selfish delights of your own sensations in loving Him. Hence it is said (Eccles. ii. 2,3): "Be not impatient in the time of dryness and obscurity; suffer the suspensions and delays of the consolations of God; cleave unto him, and wait upon him patiently, that thy life may increase and be renewed."

Be patient in prayer, though during your whole lifetime you should do nothing else than wait the return of the Beloved in a spirit of humiliation, abandonment, contentment, and resignation. Most excellent prayer! and it may be intermingled with the sighings of plaintive love! This conduct indeed is most pleasing to the heart of God, and will, above all others, compel his return.

C H A P T E R VI.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-ABANDONMENT.

HERE we must begin to abandon and give up our whole existence to God, from the strong and positive conviction, that the occurrences of every moment result from his immediate will and permission, and are just such as our state requires. This conviction will make us content with everything; and cause us to regard all that happens, not from the side of the creature, but from that of God.

But, dearly beloved, whoever you are who sincerely wish to give yourselves up to God, I conjure you, that after having once made the donation, you take not yourselves back again; remember, a gift once presented, is no longer at the disposal of the giver.

2. Abandonment is a matter of the greatest importance in our progress; it is the key to the inner court; so that he who knows truly how to abandon himself, will soon become perfect. We must therefore continue steadfast and immovable therein, without listening to the voice of natural reason. Great faith produces great abandonment; we must confide in God, "hoping against hope." (Rom. iv. 18.)

3. Abandonment is the casting off all selfish care, that we may be altogether at the divine disposal. 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 will bring it to pass." (Psalm xxxvii. 5.)

Our abandonment, then, should be, both in respect to external and internal things, an absolute giving up of all our concerns into the hands of God, forgetting ourselves and thinking only of Him; by which the heart will remain always disengaged, free, and at peace.

4. It is practised by continually losing our own will in the will of God; renouncing every private inclination as soon as it arises, however good it may appear, that we may stand in indifference with respect to ourselves, and only will what God has willed from all eternity; resigning ourselves in all things, whether for soul or body, for time or eternity; forgetting the past, leaving the future to Providence, and devoting the present to God; satisfied with the present moment, which brings with it God's eternal order in reference to us, and is as infallible a declaration of his will, as it is inevitable and common to all; attributing nothing that befalls us to the creature, but regarding all things in God, and looking upon all, excepting only our sins, as infallibly proceeding from Him.

Surrender yourselves then to be led and disposed of just as God pleases, with respect both to your outward and inward state.

C H A P T E R VII.

SUFFERING - A SOURCE OF CONSOLATION.

BE patient under all the sufferings God sends; if your love to Him be pure, you will not seek Him less on Calvary, than on Tabor; and surely, He should be as much loved on that as on this, since it was on Calvary that he made the greatest display of love.

Be not like those who give themselves to Him at one season, only to withdraw from Him at another. They give themselves only to be caressed, and wrest themselves back again, when they are crucified; or at least turn for consolation to the creature.

2. No, beloved souls, you will not find consolation in aught but in the love of the cross, and in total abandonment; who savoreth not the cross, savoreth not the things that be of God. (See Matt. xvi. 23.) It is impossible to love God without loving the cross; and a heart that savors the cross, finds the bitterest things to be sweet; "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet;" (Prov. xxvii. 7:) because it finds itself hungering for God, in proportion as it is hungering for the cross. God gives us the cross, and the cross gives us God.

We may be assured that there is an internal advancement, when there is progress in the way of the cross; abandonment and the cross go hand in hand together.

3. As soon as anything is presented in the form of suffering, and you feel a repugnance, resign yourself immediately to God with respect to it, and give yourself up to Him in sacrifice: you will then find, that when the cross arrives, it will not be so very burthensome, because you have yourself desired it. This, however does not prevent you from feeling its weight, as some have imagined; for when we do not feel the cross, we do not suffer. A sensibility to suffering is one of the principal parts of suffering itself. Jesus Christ himself chose to endure its utmost rigors. We often bear the cross in weakness, at other times in strength; all should be alike to us in the will of God.

C H A P T E R VIII.

ON MYSTERIES.

IT will be objected, that, by this method, we shall have no mysteries imprinted on our minds; but so far is this from bring the case, that it is the peculiar means of imparting them to the soul. Jesus Christ, to whom we are abandoned, and whom we follow as the way, whom we hear as the truth, and who animates us as the life (John xiv. 6,) in imprinting himself on the soul, impresses there the characters of his different states. To bear all the states of Jesus Christ, is a much greater thing, than merely to meditate about them. St. Paul bore in his body the states of Jesus Christ; "I bear in my body," says he, "the marks of the Lord Jesus;" (Gal. vi. 17;) but he does not say that he reasoned thereon.

2. In this state of abandonment Jesus Christ frequently communicates some peculiar views, or revelations of his states: these we should thankfully accept, and dispose ourselves for what appears to be his will; receiving equally whatever frame He may bestow, and having no other choice, but that of ardently reaching after Him, of dwelling ever with Him, and of sinking into nothingness before Him, and accepting indiscriminately all his gifts, whether darkness or illumination, fecundity or barrenness, weakness or strength, sweetness or bitterness, temptations, distractions, pain, weariness, or uncertainty; and none of all these should, for one moment, retard our course.

3. God engages some, for whole years, in the contemplation and enjoyment of a single mystery, the simple view or contemplation of which recollects the soul; let them be faithful to it; but as soon as God is pleased to withdraw this view from the soul, let it freely yield to the deprivation. Some are very uneasy at their inability to meditate on certain mysteries; but without reason, since an affectionate attachment to God includes in itself every species of devotion, and whoever is calmly united to God alone, is, indeed, most excellently and effectually applied to every divine mystery. Whoever loves God loves all that appertains to him.

C H A P T E R IX.

ON VIRTUE.

IT is thus that we acquire virtue with facility and certainty; for as God is the principle of all virtue, we inherit all in the possession of Himself; and in proportion as we approach toward his possession, in like proportion do we receive the most eminent virtues. For all virtue is but as a mask, an outside appearance mutable as our garments, if it be not bestowed from within; then, indeed, it is genuine, essential, and permanent: "The King's daughter is all glorious within," says David. (Psalm xlv. 13.) These souls, above all others, practice virtue in the most eminent degree, though they advert not to any particular virtue. God, to whom they are united, leads them to the most extensive practice of it; He is exceedingly jealous over them, and permits them not the least pleasure.

2. What a hungering for sufferings have those souls, who thus glow with divine love! How would they precipitate themselves into excessive austerities, were they permitted to pursue their own inclinations! They think of nought save how they may please their Beloved; and they begin to neglect and forget themselves; and as their love to God increases, so do self-detestation and disregard of the creature.

3. O were this simple method once acquired, a way so suited to all, to the dull and ignorant as well as to the most learned, how easily would the whole church of God be reformed! LOVE only is required: "Love," says St. Augustine, "and then do what you please." For when we truly love, we cannot have so much as a will to do anything that might offend the object of our affections.

CHAPTER X.

MORTIFICATION MUST BE INTERIOUR.

I SAY further, that, in any other way, it is next to impossible to acquire a perfect mortification of the senses and passions.

The reason is obvious: the soul gives vigor and energy to the senses, and the senses raise and stimulate the passions; a dead body has neither sensations nor passions, because its connection with the soul is dissolved. All endeavors merely to rectify the exterior impel the soul yet farther outward into that about which it is so warmly and zealously engaged. Its powers are diffused and scattered abroad; for, its whole attention being immediately directed to austerities and other externals, it thus invigorates those very senses it is aiming to subdue. For the senses have no other spring whence to derive their vigor than the application of the soul to themselves, the degree of their life and activity being proportioned to the degree of attention which the soul bestows upon them. This life of the senses stirs up and provokes the passions, instead of suppressing or subduing them; austerities may indeed enfeeble the body, but for the reasons just mentioned, can never take off the keenness of the senses, nor lessen their activity.

2. The only method of effecting this, is inward recollection, by which the soul is turned wholly and altogether inward, to possess a present God. If it direct all its vigor and energy within, this simple act separates it from the senses, and, employing all its powers internally, it renders them faint; and the nearer it draws to God, the farther is it separated from self. Hence it is, that those in whom the attractions of grace are very powerful, find the outward man altogether weak and feeble, and even liable to faintings.

3. I do not mean by this, to discourage mortification; for it should ever accompany prayer, according to the strength and state of the person, or as obedience demands. But I say, that mortification should not be our principal exercise; nor should we prescribe to ourselves such and such austerities, but simply following the

internal attractions of grace, and being occupied with the divine presence, without thinking particularly on mortification, God will enable us to perform every species of it. He gives those who abide faithful to their abandonment to Him, no relaxation until He has subdued everything in them that remains to be mortified.

We have only, then, to continue steadfast in the utmost attention to God, and all things will be perfectly done. All are not capable of outward austerities, but all are capable of this. In the mortification of the eye and ear, which continually supply the busy imagination with new subjects, there is little danger of falling into excess; but God will teach us this also, and we have only to follow his Spirit.

4. The soul has a double advantage by proceeding thus; for, in withdrawing from outward objects, it constantly draws nearer to God; and besides the secret sustaining and preserving power and virtue which it receives, it is farther removed from sin the nearer it comes to Him; so that its conversion becomes firmly established as a matter of habit.

C H A P T E R X I.

ON PERFECT CONVERSION.

"Turn ye unto Him from whom the children of Israel have so deeply revolted." (Isa. xxxi. 6.) Conversion is nothing more than turning from the creature in order to return to God.

It is not perfect (however good and essential to salvation) when it consists simply in turning from sin to grace. To be complete, it should take place from without inwardly.

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

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

2. GOD has an attractive virtue which draws the soul more and more powerfully to Himself, and in attracting, He purifies; just as it is with a gross vapor exhaled by the sun, which, as it gradually ascends, is rarified and rendered pure; the vapor, indeed, contributes to its ascent only by its passivity; but the soul co-operates freely and voluntarily.

This kind of introversion is very easy and advances the soul naturally, and without effort, because God is our centre. The centre always exerts a very powerful attractive virtue; and the more spiritual and exalted it is, the more violent and irresistible are its attractions.

3. But besides the attracting virtue of the centre, there is, in every creature, a strong tendency to reunion with its centre, which is vigorous and active in proportion to the spirituality and perfection of the subject.

As soon as anything is turned towards its centre, it is precipitated towards it with extreme rapidity, unless it be withheld by some invincible obstacle. A stone held in the hand is no sooner disengaged than by its own

weight it falls to the earth as to its centre; so also water and fire, when unobstructed, flow incessantly towards their centre. Now, when the soul by its efforts to recollect itself, is brought into the influence of the central tendency, it falls gradually, without any other force than the weight of love, into its proper centre; and the more passive and tranquil it remains, and the freer from self-motion, the more rapidly it advances, because the energy of the central attractive virtue is unobstructed, and has full liberty for action.

4. All our care should therefore be directed towards acquiring the greatest degree of inward recollection; nor should we be discouraged by the difficulties we encounter in this exercise, which will soon be recompensed on the part of God, by such abundant supplies of grace, as will render it perfectly easy, provided we are faithful in meekly withdrawing our hearts from outward distractions and occupations, and returning to our centre, with affections full of tenderness and serenity. When at any time the passions are turbulent, a gentle retreat inwards to a present God, easily deadens them; any other way of opposing rather irritates than appeases them.

C H A P T E R XII.

PRAYER OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

THE soul that is faithful in the exercise of love and adherence to God, as above described, is astonished to feel Him gradually taking possession of its whole being; it now enjoys a continual sense of that presence which is become as it were natural to it; and this, as well as prayer, becomes a matter of habit. It feels an unusual serenity gradually diffusing itself over all its faculties. Silence now constitutes its whole prayer; whilst God communicates an infused love, which is the beginning of ineffable blessedness.

O that I were permitted to pursue this subject, and describe some degrees of the endless progression of subsequent states? But I now write only for beginners; and shall therefore proceed no farther, but wait our Lord's time for developing what may be applicable to every state.

2. We must, however, urge it as a matter of the highest import, to cease from self-action and self-exertion, that God himself may act alone: He says by the mouth of his prophet David, "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm xlv. 10.) But the creature is so infatuated with love and attachment to its own working, that it does not believe that it works at all unless it can feel, know, and distinguish all its operations. It is ignorant that its inability minutely to observe the manner of its motion, is occasioned by the swiftness of its progress; and that the operations of God, abounding more and more, absorb those of the creature; just as we see that the stars shine brightly before the sun rises, but gradually vanish as his light advances, and become invisible, not from want of light in themselves, but from the excess of it in him.

The case is similar here; for there is a strong and universal light which absorbs all the little distinct lights of the soul; they grow faint and disappear under its powerful influence, and self-activity is now no longer distinguishable.

3. Those greatly err, who accuse this prayer of inactivity, a charge that can only arise from inexperience. O! if they would but make some efforts towards the attainment of it, they would soon become full of light and knowledge in relation to it.

This appearance of inaction is, indeed, not the consequence of sterility, but of abundance, as will be clearly perceived by the experienced soul, who will recognize that the silence is full and unctuous by reason of plenty.

4. There are two kinds of people that keep silence; the one because they have nothing to say, the other because they have too much: the latter is the case in this state; silence is occasioned by excess and not by defect.

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

The infant hanging at its mother's breast, is a lively illustration of our subject; it begins to draw the milk, by moving its little lips; but when its nourishment flows abundantly, it is content to swallow without effort; by any other course it would only hurt itself, spill the milk, and be obliged to quit the breast.

We must act in like manner in the beginning of prayer, by moving the lips of the affections; but as soon as the milk of divine grace flows freely, we have nothing to do, but, in stillness, sweetly to imbibe it, and when it ceases to flow, again stir up the affections as the infant moves its lips. Whoever acts otherwise, cannot make the best use of this grace, which is bestowed to allure the soul into the repose of Love, and not to force it into the multiplicity of self.

5. But what becomes of the babe that thus gently and without exertion, drinks in the milk? Who would believe that it could thus receive nourishment? Yet the more peacefully it feeds, the better it thrives. What, I say, becomes of this infant? It drops asleep on its mother's bosom. So the soul that is tranquil and peaceful in prayer, sinks frequently into a mystic slumber, wherein all its powers are at rest, till it is wholly fitted for that state, of which it enjoys these transient anticipations. You see that in this process the soul is led naturally, without trouble, effort, art or study.

The interior is not a strong hold, to be taken by storm and violence; but a kingdom of peace, which is to be gained only by love. If any will thus pursue the little path I have pointed out, it will lead them to infused prayer. God demands nothing extraordinary nor too difficult; on the contrary, He is greatly pleased by a simple and child-like conduct.

6. The most sublime attainments in religion, are those which are easiest reached; the most necessary ordinances are the least difficult. It is thus also in natural things; if you would reach the sea, embark on a river, and you will be conveyed to it insensibly and without exertion. Would you go to God, follow this sweet and simple path, and you will arrive at the desired object, with an ease and expedition that will amaze you.

O that you would but once make the trial! how soon would you find that all I have said is too little, and that your own experience will carry you infinitely beyond it! What is it you fear? why do you not instantly cast yourself into the arms of LOVE, who only extended them on the cross that He might embrace you? What risk do you run in depending solely on God, and abandoning yourself wholly to Him? Ah! he will not deceive you, unless by bestowing an abundance beyond your highest hopes; but those who expect all from themselves, may hear this rebuke of God by his prophet Isaiah, "Ye have wearied yourselves in the multiplicity of your ways, and have not said, let us rest in peace." (Isa. lvii. 10, vulgate.)

C H A P T E R XIII.

ON REST BEFORE GOD.

THE SOUL advanced thus far, has no need of any other preparation than its quietude: for now the presence of God, during the day, which is the great effect, or rather continuation of prayer, begins to be infused, and almost without intermission. The soul certainly enjoys transcendent blessedness, and finds that God is more intimately present to it than it is to itself.

The only way to find him is by introversion. No sooner do the bodily eyes close, than the soul is wrapt in prayer: it is amazed at so great a blessing, and enjoys an internal converse, which external matters cannot interrupt.

2. The same may be said of this species of prayer, that is said of wisdom: "all good things come together with her." (Wisdom vii. 11.) For virtues flow from this soul into exercise with so much sweetness and facility, that they appear natural to it, and the living spring within breaks forth abundantly into a facility for all goodness, and an insensibility to all evil.

3. Let it then remain faithful in this state; and beware of choosing or seeking any other disposition whatever than this simple rest, as a preparative either to confession or communion, to action or prayer; for its sole business is to suffer itself to be filled with this divine effusion. I would not be understood to speak of the preparations necessary for ordinances, but of the most perfect interior disposition in which they can be received.

C H A P T E R X I V .

ON INTERIOUR SILENCE.

"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 indispensable, is, because the Word is essential and eternal, and necessarily requires dispositions in the soul in some degree correspondent to His nature, as a capacity for the reception of Himself. Hearing is a sense formed to receive sounds, and is rather passive than active, admitting, but not communicating sensation; and if we would hear, we must lend the ear for that purpose. Christ, the eternal Word, who must be communicated to the soul to give it new life, requires the most intense attention to his voice, when He would speak within us.

2. Hence it is so frequently enjoined upon us in sacred writ, to listen and be attentive to the voice of God; I quote a few of the numerous exhortations to this effect: "Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation!" (Isa. li. 4,) and again "Hear me, all ye whom I carry in my bosom, and bear within my bowels:" (Isa. xlvi. 3,) and further by the Psalmist, "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 forget ourselves, and all self-interest, and listen and be attentive to God; these two simple actions, or rather passive dispositions, produce the love of that beauty, which He himself communicates.

3. Outward silence is very requisite for the cultivation and improvement of inward; and, indeed, it is impossible we should become truly interior, without loving silence and retirement. God saith by the mouth of his prophet, "I will lead her into solitude, and there will I speak to her heart (Hos. ii. 14, vulg.); and unquestionably the being internally engaged with God is wholly incompatible with being externally busied about a thousand trifles.

When, through weakness, we become as it were uncentered, we must immediately turn again inward; and this process we must repeat as often as our distractions recur. It is a small matter to be devout and recollected for an hour or half hour, if the unction and spirit of prayer do not continue with us during the whole day.

C H A P T E R X V .

GOD HIMSELF EXAMINES US.

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

When we examine with effort, we are easily deceived, and betrayed by self-love into error: "We call the evil good, and the good evil," (Isa. v. 20); but when we lie in full exposure before the Sun of Righteousness, his divine beams render the smallest atoms visible. We must, then, forsake self, and abandon our souls to God, as well in examination as confession.

2. When souls have attained to this species of prayer, no fault escapes the reprehension of God; no sooner are they committed than they are rebuked by an inward burning and tender confusion. Such is the scrutiny of Him who suffers no evil to be concealed; and the only way is to turn simply to God, and bear the pain and correction He inflicts.

As He becomes the incessant examiner of the soul, it can now no longer examine itself; and if it be faithful in its abandonment, experience will prove that it is much more effectually explored by his divine light, than by all its own carefulness.

3. Those who tread these paths should be informed of a matter respecting their confession, in which they are apt to err. When they begin to give an account of their sins, instead of the regret and contrition they had been accustomed to feel, they find that love and tranquility sweetly pervade and take possession of their souls: now those who are not properly instructed are desirous of resisting this sensation, and forming an act of contrition, because they have heard, and with truth, that this is requisite. But they are not aware that they thereby lose the genuine contrition, which is this infused love, and which infinitely surpasses any effect produced by self-exertion, comprehending the other acts in itself as in one principal act, in much higher perfection than if they were distinctly perceived.

Let them not be troubled to do otherwise, when God acts so excellently in and for them. To hate sin in this manner, is to hate it as God does. The purest love is that which is of his immediate operation in the soul; why should we then be so eager for action? Let us remain in the state He assigns us, agreeably to the instructions of the wise man: "Put your confidence in God; remain in quiet where he hath placed you." (Eccles. xi. 22.)

4. The soul will also be amazed at finding a difficulty in calling its faults to remembrance. This, however, should cause no uneasiness, first, because this forgetfulness of our faults is some proof of our purification from them, and, in this degree of advancement, it is best to forget whatever concerns ourselves that we

may remember only God. Secondly, because, when confession is our duty, God will not fail to make known to us our greatest faults; for then He himself examines; and the soul will feel the end of examination more perfectly accomplished, than it could possibly have been by all our own endeavors.

5. These instructions, however, would be altogether unsuitable to the preceding degrees, while the soul continues in its active state, wherein it is right and necessary that it should in all things exert itself, in proportion to its advancement. As to those who have arrived at this more advanced state, I exhort them to follow these instructions, and not to vary their simple occupations even on approaching the communion; let them remain in silence, and suffer God to act freely. He cannot be better received than by Himself.

C H A P T E R XVI.

ON READING AND VOCAL PRAYERS.

THE method of reading in this state, is to cease when you feel yourself recollected, and remain in stillness, reading but little, and always desisting when thus internally attracted.

2. The soul that is called to a state of inward silence, should not encumber itself with vocal prayers; whenever it makes use of them, and finds a difficulty therein, and an attraction to silence, let it not use constraint by persevering, but yield to the internal drawings, unless the repeating such prayers be a matter of obligation. In any other case, it is much better not to be burdened with and tied down to the repetition of set forms, but wholly given up to the leadings of the Holy Spirit; and in this way every species of devotion is fulfilled in a most eminent degree.

C H A P T E R XVII.

THE SPIRIT INDITES OUR PETITIONS.

THE soul should not be surprised at feeling itself unable to offer up to God such petitions as had formerly been made with facility; for now the Spirit maketh intercession for it according to the will of God; that Spirit which 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.) We must second the designs of God, which tend to divest us of all our own operations, that his may be substituted in their place.

2. Let this, then, be done in you; and suffer not yourself to be attached to anything, however good it may appear; it is no longer such to you, if it in any measure turns you aside from what God desires of you. For the divine will is preferable to every other good. Shake off, then, all self-interest, and live by faith and abandonment; here it is that genuine faith begins truly to operate.

C H A P T E R XVIII.

ON FAULTS COMMITTED.

SHOULD we either wander among externals, or commit a fault, we must instantly turn inwards; for having departed thereby from God, we should as soon as possible turn toward Him, and suffer the penalty which He inflicts.

It is of great importance to guard against vexation on account of our faults; it springs from a secret root of pride, and a love of our own excellence; we are hurt at feeling what we are.

2. If we become discouraged, we are the more enfeebled; and from our reflections on our imperfections, a chagrin arises, which is often worse than the imperfections themselves.

The truly humble soul is not surprised at its defects or failings; and the more miserable it beholds itself, the more it abandons itself to God, and presses for a more intimate alliance with Him, seeing the need it has of his aid. We should the rather be induced to act thus, as God himself has said, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." (Psalm xxxii. 8.)

C H A P T E R XIX.

ON DISTRACTIONS AND TEMPTATIONS.

A DIRECT struggle with distractions and temptations rather serves to augment them, and withdraws the soul from that adherence to God, which should ever be its sole occupation. We should simply turn away from the evil, and draw yet nearer to God. A little child, on perceiving a monster, does not wait to fight with it, and will scarcely turn its eyes toward it, but quickly shrinks into the bosom of its mother, in assurance of its safety. "God is in the midst of her," says the Psalmist, "she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early." (Psalm xli. 5.)

2. If we do otherwise, and in our weakness attempt to attack our enemies, we shall frequently find ourselves wounded, if not totally defeated: but, by remaining in the simple presence of God, we shall find instant supplies of strength for our support. This was the resource of David: "I have set," says he, "the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope." (Psalm xvi. 8,9.) And it is said in Exodus, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." (Exod. xiv. 14.)

C H A P T E R XX.

PRAYER DIVINELY EXPLAINED.

BOTH devotion and sacrifice are comprehended in prayer, which, according to St. John is an incense, the smoke whereof ascendeth unto God; therefore it is said in the Apocalypse, that "unto the angel was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints." (Rev. viii. 3.)

Prayer is the effusion 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.) The prayer of the wise men at the feet of Christ in the stable of Bethlehem, was signified by the incense they offered.

2. Prayer is a certain warmth of love, melting, dissolving, and sublimating the soul, and causing it to ascend unto God, and, as the soul is melted, odors rise from it; and these sweet exhalations proceed from the consuming fire of love within.

This is illustrated in the Canticles, (i. 12,) where the spouse says, "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." The table is the centre of the soul; and when God is there, and we know how to dwell near, and abide with Him, the sacred presence gradually dissolves the hardness of the soul, and, as it melts, fragrance issues forth; hence it is, that the Beloved says of his spouse, in seeing her soul melt when he spoke, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness, like pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?" (Cant. v. 6; iii. 6.)

3. Thus does the soul ascend to God, by giving up self to the destroying and annihilating power of divine love. This is a state of sacrifice essential to the Christian religion, in which the soul suffers itself to be destroyed and annihilated, that it may pay homage to the sovereignty of God; as it is written, "The power of the Lord is great, and he is honored only by the humble." (Eccles. iii. 21.) By the destruction of self, we acknowledge the supreme existence of God. We must cease to exist in self, in order that the Spirit of the Eternal Word may exist in us: it is by the giving up of our own life, that we give place to his coming; and in dying to ourselves, He himself lives in us.

We must surrender our whole being to Christ Jesus, and cease to live any longer in ourselves, that He may become our life; "that being dead, our life may be hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.) "Pass ye into me," sayeth God, "all ye who earnestly seek after me." (Eccles. xxiv. 16.) But how is it we pass into God? In no way but by leaving and forsaking ourselves, that we may be lost in Him; and this can be effected only by annihilation, which, being the true prayer of adoration, renders unto God alone, all blessing, honor, glory, and power, forever and ever." (Rev. v. 13.)

4. This prayer of truth; it is "worshipping God in spirit and in truth:" (John iv. 23.) "In spirit," because we enter into the purity of that Spirit which prayeth within us, and are drawn forth from our own carnal and human method; "in truth," because we are thereby placed in the truth of the all of God, and the nothing of the creature.

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

Ah! did we but know the virtues and the blessings which the soul derives from this prayer, we should not be willing to do anything else; It is the pearl of great price; the hidden treasure, (Matt. xiii. 44,45,) which, whoever findeth, selleth freely all that he hath to purchase it; it is the well of living water, which springeth up unto everlasting life. It is the adoration of God "in spirit and in truth:" (John iv. 14-23:) and it is the full performance of the purest evangelical precepts.

5. Jesus Christ assures us, that the "kingdom of God is within us:" (Luke xvii. 21:) and this is true in two senses: first, when God becomes so fully Master and Lord in us, that nothing resists his dominion, then our interior is his kingdom; and again, when we possess God, who is the Supreme Good, we possess his kingdom also, wherein there is fulness of joy, and where we attain the end of our creation. Thus it is said, "to serve God is to reign." The end of our creation, indeed, is to enjoy God, even in this life; but, alas! who thinks of it?

C H A P T E R XXI.

THE SOUL ACTIVE WHEN SELF IS STILL.

SOME persons, when they hear of the prayer of silence, falsely imagine that the soul remains stupid, dead, and inactive; but it unquestionably acts more nobly and more extensively than it had ever done before; for God himself is its mover, and it now acts by the agency of his Spirit. St. Paul would have us led by the Spirit of God. (Rom. viii. 14.)

It is not meant that we should cease from action; but that we should act through the internal agency of his grace. This is finely represented by the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the wheels, which had a living Spirit;

and whithersoever the Spirit was to go, they went; they ascended and descended as they were moved; for the Spirit of life was in them, and they returned not when they went. (Ezek. i. 18-21.) Thus the soul should be equally subservient to the will of that vivifying Spirit which is in it, and scrupulously faithful to follow only as that moves. These motions never tend to return in reflections on the creatures or self; but go forward in an incessant approach toward the end.

2. This activity of the soul is attended with the utmost tranquility. When it acts of itself, the act is forced and constrained, and, therefore, it is more easily distinguished; but when the action is under the influence of the Spirit of grace, it is so free, so easy, and so natural, that it almost seems as if we did not act at all. "He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me." (Ps. xviii. 19.)

When the soul is in its central tendency, or in other words, is returned through recollection into itself, from that moment, the central attraction becomes a most potent activity, infinitely surpassing in energy every other species. Nothing, indeed, can equal the swiftness of this tendency to the centre; and though an activity, yet it is so noble, so peaceful, so full of tranquility, so natural, and so spontaneous, that it appears to the soul as if it were none at all.

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

3. This attracting Spirit is no other than God himself, who, in drawing us, causes us to run to Him. How well did the spouse understand this, when she said, "Draw me, we will run after thee." (Cant. i. 4.) Draw me unto Thee, O my divine centre, by the secret springs of my existence, and all my powers and senses shall follow Thee! This simple attraction is both an ointment to heal and a perfume to allure: we follow, saith she, the fragrance of thy perfumes; and though so powerful an attraction, it is followed by the soul freely, and without constraint; for it is equally delightful as forcible; and whilst it attracts by its power, it carries us away by its sweetness. "Draw me," says the spouse, "and we will run after thee." She speaks of and to herself: "draw me," -- behold the unity of the centre which is drawn! "we will run,"-- behold the correspondence and course of all the senses and powers in following the attraction of the centre!

4. Instead, then, of encouraging sloth, we promote the highest activity, by inculcating a total dependence on the Spirit of God, as our moving principle; for it is in Him, and by Him alone, that we live and move, and have our being. (Acts xvii. 28.) This meek dependence on the Spirit of God is indispensably necessary, and causes the soul shortly to attain the unity and simplicity in which it was created.

We must, therefore, forsake our multifarious activity, to enter into the simplicity and unity of God, in whose image we were originally formed. (Gen. i. 27.) "The Spirit is one and manifold, (Wisdom vii. 22,) and his unity does not preclude his multiplicity. We enter into his unity when we are united to his Spirit, and by that means have one and the same spirit with Him; and we are multiplied in respect to the outward execution of his will, without any departure from our state of union.

In this way, when we are wholly moved by the divine Spirit, which is infinitely active, our activity must, indeed, be more energetic than that which is merely our own. We must yield ourselves to the guidance of "wisdom, which is more moving than any motion," (Wisdom vii. 24,) and by abiding in dependence upon its action, our activity will be truly efficient.

5. "All things were made by the Word, and without Him was not anything made, that was made." (John i. 3.) God originally formed us in his own image and likeness; He breathed into us the Spirit of his Word, that breath of Life (Gen. ii. 7) which He gave us at our creation, in the participation whereof the image of God consisted. Now, this LIFE is one, simple, pure, intimate, and always fruitful.

The devil having broken and deformed the divine image in the soul by sin, the agency of the same Word whose Spirit was inbreathed at ou

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