

The Way to God

by Madame Guyon

The Way of Faith is a journey of conversion, where the Soul passes from multiplicity to Naked Faith, dying to itself and living from the Life of God only.

Scripture: Psalm 40:8, Psalm 139:23, John 10:10, Romans 7:15, 1 Corinthians 2:10, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 3:19, Colossians 3:3, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Union With God"

Description

Madame Guyon preaches about the journey of the Soul towards God through different degrees of transformation and union. The first degree involves the return of the Soul to God through true conversion. The second degree focuses on the effectual touch in the will, leading to recollection and the pursuit of God within. The third degree emphasizes passivity and interior sacrifice, where the Soul experiences alternations of dryness and facility. The fourth degree signifies naked faith, where the Soul undergoes desolation and total surrender to God. The fifth degree culminates in mystical death, where the Soul unites with God but awaits recognition. The sermon concludes with the transformation of the Soul in God, leading to immense expansion and a profound union with the divine will.

Transcript

THE FIRST DEGREE: CONVERSION.

1. THE first degree is the return of the Soul to God, when, being truly converted, it begins to subsist by means of his grace.

THE SECOND DEGREE: THE EFFECTUAL TOUCH IN THE WILL.

2. THE Soul then receives an effectual Touch in the Will, which invites it to recollection, and instructs it that God is within, and must be sought there; that He is present in the Heart, and must be there enjoyed.

3. This discovery, in the beginning, is the source of very great joy to the Soul, as it is an intimation or pledge of happiness to come; in its very commencement, the road it is to pursue is opened and is shown to be that of the Inward Life. This knowledge is the more admirable, as it is the spring of all the felicity of the Soul, and the solid foundation of interior progress; for those Souls who tend toward God merely by the intellect, even though they should enjoy a somewhat spiritual contemplation, yet can never enter into

Intimate Union, if they do not quit that path and enter this of the Inward Touch, where the whole working is in the Will.

4. Those who are led in this Way, though conducted by a blind abandonment, yet experience a savory knowledge. They never walk by the light of the intellect, like the former, who receive distinct lights to guide them, and who, having a clear view of the road, never enter those impenetrable passes of the hidden Will which are reserved for the latter. The former proceed upon the evidence furnished by their illuminations, assisted by their reason, and they do well; but the latter are destined to pursue blindly an unknown course, which, nevertheless, appears perfectly natural to them, although they seem obliged to feel their way. They go, however, with more certainty than the others, who are subject to be misled in their intellectual illuminations; but these are guided by a supreme Will which conducts them howsoever it will. And further, all the more immediate operations are performed in the Centre of the Soul, that is, in the Three Powers reduced to the Unity of the Will, where they are all absorbed, insensibly following the path prescribed for them by that Touch to which we have before referred.

5. These latter are they who pursue the Way of Faith and absolute Abandonment. They have neither relish nor liberty for any other path; all else constrains and embarrasses them. They dwell in greater aridities than the others, for as there is nothing distinct to which their minds are attached, their thoughts often wander and have nothing to fix them. And as there are differences in Souls, some having more sensible delights, and others being drier, so it is with those who are led by the Will; the former sort have more relish and less solid acquirement, and should restrain their too eager disposition, and suffer their emotions to pass, even when they seem burning with love; the latter seem harder and more insensible, and their state appears altogether natural; nevertheless, there is a delicate something in the depth of the Will, which serves to nourish them, and which is, as it were, the condensed Essence of what the others experience in the intellect and in ardor of purpose.

6. Still, as this support is exceedingly delicate, it frequently becomes imperceptible, and is hidden by the slightest thing. This gives rise to great suffering, especially in times of tribulation and temptation; for as the relish and support are delicate and concealed, the Will partakes of the same character in a high degree, so that such Souls have none of those strong wills. Their state is more indifferent and insensible, and their way more equable; but this does not hinder them from having as severe and even more serious trouble than others; for nothing being done in them by impulse, everything takes place, as it were, naturally, and their feeble, insensible, hidden Wills cannot be found, to make head against their foes. Their Fidelity, however, often excels that of the others. Notice the striking difference between Peter and John; one seems to be overflowing with extraordinary zeal, and falls away at the voice of a maid-servant; the other makes no external manifestation, and remains faithful unto the end.

7. You will ask me, then, if these Souls are urged on by no violent influence, but walk in blindness, do they do the will of God? They do, more truly, although they have no distinct assurance of it; His Will is engraved in indelible characters on their very inmost recesses, so that they perform with a cold and languid, but firm and inviolable, abandonment, what the others accomplish by the drawings of an exquisite delight.

8. Thus they go on under the influence of this divine touch, from one degree to another, by a faith more or less sensibly savory, and experience constant alternations of aridity and enjoyment of the presence of God, but ever finding that the enjoyment becomes continually deeper and less perceptible, and thus more delicate and interior. They discover, too, that in the midst of their aridity, and without any distinct illumination, they are not the less enlightened; for this state is luminous in itself, though dark to the Soul

that dwells in it. And so true is this, that they find themselves more acquainted with the truth; I mean that truth implanted in their interior, and which causes everything to yield to the Will of God. This divine Will becomes more familiar to them, and they are enabled, in their insipid way, to penetrate a thousand Mysteries that never could have been discovered by the light of reason and knowledge. They are insensibly and gradually preparing, without being aware of it, for the states that are to follow.

9. The trials of this state are alternations of dryness and facility. The former purified the attachment or tendency and natural relish that we have for the enjoyment of God. So that the whole of this degree is passed in these alternations of enjoyment, aridity, and facility, without any intermixture of temptations, except very transitory ones, or certain faults; for in every state, from the beginning onward, the faults of nature are much more liable to overtake us in times of aridity than in seasons of interior joy, when the Unction of Grace secures us from a thousand evils. In all the preceding states thus far, the Soul is engaged in combatting its evil habits, and in endeavoring to overcome them by all sorts of painful Self-denial.

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

11. This destruction of the appetites and repugnances of the outward senses, belongs to the second degree, which I have called the effectual Touch in the Will, and in which the highest and greatest virtue is practised, especially when the inward drawing is vigorous and the Unction very savory. For there is no sort of contrivance that God does not discover to the Soul, to enable it to conquer and overcome Self in everything; so that at length, by this constant practice, accompanied by the gracious Unction before referred to, the Spirit gets the upper hand of Nature, and the interior part comes under subjection without resistance. There is, then, no further trouble from this source, any more than if all external feeling had been taken away. This state is mistaken, by those who are but little enlightened, for a state of Death; it is, indeed, the Death of the Senses, but there is yet a long way to that of the Spirit.

THE THIRD DEGREE: PASSIVITY AND INTERIOR SACRIFICE.

12. WHEN we have for some time enjoyed the repose of a victory that has cost us so much trouble, and suppose ourselves forever relieved from an enemy whose whole power has been destroyed, we enter into the third degree, next in order to the other, which is a Way of Faith more or less savory, according to the state. We enter into a condition of alternate dryness and facility, as I have stated, and in this dryness, the Soul perceives certain exterior weaknesses, natural defects, which, though slight, take it by surprise; it feels, too, that the strength it had received for the struggle, is dying away. This is caused by the loss of our active, inward force; for although the Soul, in the second degree, imagines itself to be in silence before God, it is not entirely so. It does not speak, indeed, either in Heart or by Mouth, but it is in an active striving after God and constant outbreathing of Love, so that, being the subject of the most powerful amorous activity, exerted by the Divine Love towards Himself, it is continually leaping, as it were, towards its object, and its activity is accompanied by a delightful and almost constant Peace. As it is from this activity of Love that we acquire the strength to overcome Nature, it is then that we practice the greatest virtues and most severe mortifications.

13. But just in proportion as this activity decays, and is lost in an amorous passivity, so does our strength of resistance sink and diminish, and, as this degree advances, and the Soul becomes more and more passive, it becomes more and more powerless in combat. As God becomes strong within, so do we become weak. Some regard this impossibility of resistance as a great temptation, but they do not see that all our labor, aided and assisted by Grace, can only accomplish the conquest of our Outward Senses, after which God takes gradual possession of our Interior, and becomes Himself our purifier. And as He required all our watchfulness while He continued us in amorous activity, so He now requires all our Fidelity to let Him work, while He begins to render Himself Lord by the subjection of the Flesh to the Spirit.

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

15. The second degree accomplishes the destruction of the Outward Senses, the third, that of the inward, and this is brought about by means of this savory passivity. But as God is then working within, He seems to neglect the outward, and hence the reappearance of defects, though feebly and only in a time of aridity, which we thought extinct.

16. The nearer we approach the termination of the third degree, the longer and more frequent are our aridities, and the greater our weakness. This is a purification which serves to destroy our internal feelings, as the amorous activity put an end to our external, and in each degree, there are alternations of dryness and enjoyment. The dryness serves as a purifier of the joy that is to follow; it is always painful from its barrenness and weakness. As soon as we cease, from inability, to practice mortifications of our own fashioning, those of Providence take their place -- the crosses which God dispenses according to our degree. These are not chosen by the Soul; but the Soul, under the interior guidance of God, receives such as He appoints.

THE FOURTH DEGREE: NAKED FAITH.

17. THE fourth degree is Naked Faith; here we have nothing but inward and outward desolation; for the one always follows the other.

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

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

20. This degree is the longest, and only ends with total death, if the Soul be willing to be so desolated as to die wholly to Self. For there is an infinite number of Souls that never pass the first degrees, and of those who reach the present state there are very few in whom its perfect work is accomplished.

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

22. We are first deprived of our voluntary works, and become unable to do what we did in the preceding degrees; and as this increases, we begin to feel a general inability in respect to everything, which, instead

of diminishing, enlarges day by day. This weakness and inability gradually taking possession of us, we enter upon a condition in which we say: "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." (Rom. vii. 15.)

23. After being thus deprived of all things, both inward and outward, which are not essential, the work begins upon those which are; and in proportion as the virtuous life becoming a Christian, which we regarded with so much complacency, disappears, we are likewise spoiled of a certain interior delight and substantial support. As this support becomes weaker and more subtle, the more perceptible becomes its loss. It is to be remarked, however, that there is no loss except to our own consciousness, as it still exists in the Soul, but imperceptibly and without apparent action. If it were not hidden, the death and loss of Self could not be accomplished. But it retires within, and shuts itself up so closely that the Soul is not aware of its presence.

24. Do you ask why this course is pursued? The whole object of the Way thus far has been to cause the Soul to pass from multiplicity to the distinct sensible without multiplicity; from the distinct sensible to the distinct insensible; then to the sensible indistinct, which is a general delight much less attractive than the other. It is vigorous in the beginning and introduces the Soul into the perceived, which is a purer and less exquisite pleasure than the first; from the perceived, into Faith sustained and working by Love; passing in this Way from the sensible to the spiritual, and from the spiritual to Naked Faith, which, causing us to be dead to all spiritual experiences, makes us die to ourselves and pass into God, that we may live henceforth from the Life of God only.

25. In the economy of Grace, then, we begin with sensible things, continue with those which are spiritual, and end by leading the Soul gradually into its centre, and uniting it with God.

26. The more deeply this imperceptible support retires, the more does it knit the Soul together, so that it cannot continue to multiply itself among a thousand things which it can no longer either affect or even perceive; and, entirely stripped, it is gradually obliged to desert even itself.

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

28. So you may see a man pursued by a powerful adversary; he fights, and defends himself as well as he is able, always contriving, however, to get nearer and nearer to a Stronghold of Safety; but the longer he fights the weaker he becomes, while the strength of his opponent is constantly increasing. What shall he do? He will gain the portal of the stronghold as adroitly as he can, for there he will find abundant aid. But, on reaching it, he sees that it is closed, and finds that, far from rendering him any assistance, the keepers have barricaded every loophole of refuge; he must fall into the hands of his powerful enemy, whom he recognizes, when, defenceless and in despair, he has given himself up, as his best and truest friend.

29. Be sure, then, that this degree comprehends all these things; the privation of every good, the accumulation of all sorts of weaknesses, powerlessness of defence, no interior asylum; God himself often appears angry; and, to crown all, temptations.

30. Willingly, I think I hear you say, provided I might be sure that my Will was not in harmony with the malignity of Nature and the weaknesses of the senses. Ah! you would be too happy; but that cannot be. In proportion as you become enfeebled and destitute of every operation and activity of Love, however insignificant, the Will, which was founded in that vigor of Love, becoming weaker day by day, gradually disappears; and vanishing thus, it is certain that it takes no part in anything that is passing in the man, but is separate. But as it does not manifest itself anywhere, by any sign, it affords no assured support to the Soul, but the contrary; for, no longer finding the Will in an attitude of resistance, the Soul believes that it is consenting to everything, and that it has joined in with the animal will, which is the only one perceptible.

31. You will, perhaps, remind one that I have before stated that, in the first contest of amorous activity, Nature and the Senses had become, as it were, extinguished and subdued. It is true; but the Spirit of Self, by the very victories that Grace had thus acquired for it, has become high-minded, more tenacious of what it esteems good, and still more indomitable. God, who is determined to subdue it, makes use for that purpose, of an apparent resurrection of that same nature which the Soul supposed dead. But observe that He does not use Nature until He has extracted its malignity, destroyed it and separated the superior Will from that which rendered it violent and criminal. He extracts the venom of the viper, and then uses it as an antidote to the Spirit. Whoever shall become acquainted with the admirable Economy of Grace and the Wisdom of God in bringing man to a total sacrifice of Self, will be filled with delight, and, insensible as he may be, will expire with Love. The little traces of it which have been revealed to my Heart, have often overwhelmed me with ecstasy and transport.

32. Fidelity in this degree requires us to suffer Spoliation to the whole extent of the designs of God, without being anxious about ourselves, sacrificing to God all our interests both for time and for eternity. Nothing must be made a pretext for reserving or retaining the slightest atom, for the least reservation is the cause of an irreparable loss, as it prevents our death, from being total. We must let God work his absolute pleasure, and suffer the winds and tempests to beat upon us from every quarter, submerged, as we may often be, beneath the tumultuous billows.

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

34. These states are not continuous in their violence; there are remissions, which, while they afford space for taking breath, serve, at the same time, to render the subsequent trial more painful. For Nature will make use of anything to sustain its life, as a drowning man will support himself in the water by clinging to the blade of a razor, without adverting to the pain it causes him, if there be nothing else within his reach.

THE FIFTH DEGREE: MYSTICAL DEATH.

35. ATTACKED thus on all sides by so many enemies, without life and without support, we have no recourse but to expire in the arms of Love. When death is complete, the most terrible states cause no further trouble. We do not recognize death from the fact of having passed through all these states, but by an absolute want of power to feel pain, to think of or care for Self, and, by our indifference to remaining there forever, without manifesting the slightest sign of vitality. Life is evidenced by a Will for or repugnance

to something; but here, in this death of the Soul, all things are alike. It remains dead and insensible to everything that concerns itself, and, let God reduce it to what extremity He will, feels no repugnance. It has no choice between being Angel or Demon, because it has no longer any eyes for Self. It is then that God has placed all its enemies beneath his footstool, and, reigning supreme, takes and possesses it the more fully, as it has the more completely deserted itself. But this takes place by degrees.

36. There remains for a long time, even after death, a trace of the living heat, which is only gradually dissipated. All states effect somewhat towards cleansing the Soul, but here the process is completed.

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

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

39. The first life of Grace began in the sensible, and sank continually inward toward the Centre, until, having reduced the Soul to Unity, it caused it to expire in the arms of Love; for all experience this death, but each by means peculiar to himself. But the life that is now communicated arises from within; it is, as it were, a living germ which has always existed there, though unobserved, and which demonstrates that the life of Grace has never been wholly absent, however it may have been suffered to remain hidden. There it remained even in the midst of death; nor was it less death because life was concealed in it; as the silk-worm lies long dead in the chrysalis, but contains a germ of life that awakes it to a resurrection. This new life, then, buds in the Centre, and grows from there; thence it gradually extends over all the faculties and senses, impregnating them with its own life and fecundity.

40. The Soul, endued with this vitality, experiences an infinite contentment; not in itself, but in God; and this especially when the life is well advanced.

41. But, before entering upon the effects of this admirable life, let me say, that there are some who do not pass through these painful deaths; they only experience a mortal languor and fainting, which annihilate them, and cause them to die to all.

42. Many spiritual persons have given the name of death, to the earlier purifications, which are, indeed, a death in relation to the life communicated, but not a total death. They result in an extinguishment of some one of the lives of Nature, or of Grace; but that is widely different from a general extinction of all life.

43. Death has various names, according to our different manner of expression or conception. It is called a departure, that is, a separation from Self in order that we may pass into God; a loss, total and entire, of the Will of the creature, which causes the Soul to be wanting to itself, that it may exist only in God. Now, as this Will is in everything that subsists in the creature, however good and holy it may be, all these things must necessarily be destroyed, so far as they so subsist, and so far as the good will of man is in them, that the Will of God alone may remain. Everything born of the will of the flesh and the will of man, must be destroyed. Then nothing but the Will of God is left, which becomes the principle of the new life, and, gradually animating the old extinguished will, takes its place and changes it into Faith.

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

45. The Soul is dead as soon as it is separated from Self; but this death or mystic decease is not complete until it has passed into God. Until then, it suffers very greatly, but its suffering is general and indistinct, and proceeds solely from the fact that it is not yet established in its proper place.

46. The suffering which precedes death, is caused by our repugnance to the means that are to produce it. This repugnance returns whenever these means recur, or grow sharper; but in proportion as we die we become more and more insensible, and seem to harden under the blows, until at last death comes in truth through an entire cessation of all life. God has unrelentingly pursued our life into all its covert hiding places; for so malignant is it, that when hard pressed, it fortifies itself in its refuges, and makes use of the holiest and most reasonable pretexts for existence; but, being persecuted and followed into its last retreat, in a few souls (alas! how few!) it is obliged to abandon them altogether.

47. No pain then remains arising from the means which have caused our death, and which are exactly the opposite to those which used to maintain our life; the more reasonable and holy the latter are in appearance, the more unreasonable and defiled is the look of the other.

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

UNION WITH GOD: BUT NOT YET RECOGNIZED.

49. AS soon as the Soul has died in the embraces of the Lord, it is united to Him in truth and without any intermediate; for in losing everything, even its best possessions, it has lost the means and intermediates which dwelt in them; and even these greatest treasures themselves were but intermediates. It is, then, from that moment, united to God immediately, but it does not recognize it, nor does it enjoy the fruits of its Union, until He animates it and becomes its vivifying principle. A bride fainting in the arms of her husband, is closely united to him, but she does not enjoy the blessedness of the union, and may even be unconscious of it; but when he has contemplated her for some time, fainting from excess of love, and recalls her to life by his tender caresses, then she perceives that she is in possession of him whom her Soul loves, and that she is possessed by him.

Part II.

ON UNION WITH GOD.

THE RESURRECTION.

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

51. The dead Soul is in Union, but it does not enjoy the fruits of it until the moment of its Resurrection, when God, causing it to pass into Him, gives it such pledges and assurances of the consummation of its Divine Marriage, that it can no longer doubt: for this immediate Union is so spiritual, so refined, so divine, so intimate, that it is equally impossible for the Soul to conceive or to doubt it. For we may observe that the whole way whereof we speak, is infinitely removed from any imagination; these Souls are not in the least imaginative, having nothing in the intellect, and are perfectly protected from deceptions and illusions, as everything takes place within.

52. During their passage through the Way of Faith, they had nothing distinct, for distinctness is entirely opposed to Faith, and they could not enjoy anything of that sort, having only a certain generality as a foundation upon which everything was communicated to them. But it is far otherwise when the life becomes advanced in God; for though they have nothing distinct for themselves, they have for others, and their illumination for the use of others, though not always received by those for whom it was intended, is the more certain as it is more immediate, and as it were natural.

53. When God raises a Soul, that is to say, receives it into Himself, and the living germ, which is no other than the Life and Spirit of the Word, begins to appear, it constitutes the Revelation in it of Jesus Christ, (Gal. i. 16,) who lives in us by the loss of the life of Adam subsisting in Self.

54. The Soul is thus received into God, and is there gradually changed and transformed into Him, as food is transformed into the one who has partaken of it. All this takes place without any loss of its own individual existence, as has been elsewhere explained.

55. When transformation begins, it is called annihilation, since in changing our form, we become annihilated as to our own, in order to take on His. This operation goes on constantly during life, changing the Soul more and more into God, and conferring upon it a continually increasing participation in the divine qualities, making it unchangeable, immovable, etc. But He also renders it fruitful in, and not out of, Himself.

56. This fruitfulness extends to certain persons whom God gives and attaches to the Soul, communicating to it his Love, full of Charity. For the love of these divine Souls for the persons thus bestowed upon them, while it is far removed from the natural feelings, is infinitely stronger than the love of parents for their children, and though it appears eager and precipitate, it is not so, because he, who exhibits it, merely follows the movement impressed upon him.

57. To make this intelligible, we must know that God did not deprive the senses and faculties of their life, to leave them dead; for though there might be life in the Centre of the Soul, they would remain dead if that life were not also communicated to them. It increases by degrees, animates all the powers and senses which, until then, had remained barren and unfruitful, enlarges them in proportion to its communication,

and renders them active, but with an activity derived and regulated from God, according to His own designs. Persons in a dying or dead condition, must not condemn the activity of such Souls, for they could never have been put in divine motion if they had not passed through the most wonderful death. During the whole period of Faith, the Soul remains motionless; but after God has infused into it the Divine Activity, its sphere is vastly extended; but, great as it may be, it cannot execute a Self-originated movement.

THE LIFE IN GOD.

58. THERE is no more to be said here of degrees; that of Glory being all that remains, every means being left behind, and the future consisting in our enjoying an infinite stretch of life, and that more and more abundantly. (John x. 10.) As God transforms the Soul into Himself, his life is communicated to it more plentifully. The Love of God for the creature is incomprehensible, and his assiduity inexplicable; some Souls He pursues without intermission, prevents them, seats Himself at their door, and delights Himself in being with them and in loading them with the marks of his Love. He impresses this chaste, pure, and tender love upon the Heart. St. Paul and St. John the Evangelist, felt the most of this maternal affection. But to be as I have described it, it must be bestowed upon the Soul in the state of Grace of which I have just spoken; otherwise, such emotions are purely natural.

59. The prayer of the state of Faith is an absolute silence of all the powers of the Soul, and a cessation of every working, however delicate, especially toward its termination. The Soul in that state, perceiving no more prayer, and not being able to set apart fixed seasons for it, since all such exercises are taken away, is led to think that it has absolutely lost all kind of devotion. But when life returns, Prayer returns with it, and accompanied by a marvellous facility; and as God takes possession of the senses and faculties, its devotion becomes sweet, gentle, and very spiritual, but always to God. Its former devotion caused it to sink within itself, that it might enjoy God, but that which it now has, draws it out of Self, that it may be more and more lost and changed in God.

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

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

62. It would be wrong for such persons to say that they do not wish these means; that they desire God only. He is anxious that they should die to a certain interior support of Self, which causes them to say that they desire God only, and if they were to reject these means, they would withdraw themselves from the order of God, and arrest their progress. But, being given simply as means, though fruitful in grace and virtue, however secret and concealed, they finally disappear when the Soul finds itself united with the means in God, and He communicates Himself directly. Then God withdraws the means, upon which he no longer impresses any movement in the direction of the person to whom they are attached; because it

might then serve as a stay, its utility being at last recognized. The Soul can then no longer have what it had, and remains in its first death in respect to them, though still very closely united.

63. In this state of Resurrection comes that ineffable silence, by which we not only subsist in God, but commune with Him, and which, in a Soul thus dead to its own working, and general and fundamental Self-appropriation, becomes a flux and reflux of Divine Communion, with nothing to sully its purity; for there is nothing to hinder it.

64. The Soul then becomes a partaker of the ineffable communion of the Trinity, where the Father of Spirits imparts his spiritual fecundity, and makes it one Spirit with Himself. Here it is that it communes with other Souls, if they are sufficiently pure to receive its communications in silence, according to their degree and state; here, that the ineffable secrets are revealed, not by a momentary illumination, but in God Himself, where they are all hid, the Soul not possessing them for itself, nor being ignorant of them.

65. Although I have said that the Soul then has something distinct, yet it is not distinct in reference to itself, but to those with whom it communes; for what it says is said naturally and without attention, but seems extraordinary to the hearers, who, not finding the thing in themselves, notwithstanding it may be there, consider it as something distinct and wonderful, or perhaps fanatical. Souls that are still dwelling among gifts, have distinct and momentary illuminations, but these latter have only a general illumination, without defined beams, which is God Himself; whence they draw whatever they need, which is distinct whenever it is required by those with whom they are conversing, and without any of it remaining with themselves afterwards.

THE TRANSFORMATION.

66. THERE are a thousand things that might be said about the inward and celestial life of the Soul thus full of life in God, which He dearly cherishes for Himself, and which He covers externally with abasement, because He is a jealous God. But it would require a volume, and I have only to fulfill your request. God is the life and Soul of this Soul, which thus uninterruptedly lives in God, as a fish in the sea, in inexpressible happiness, though loaded with the sufferings which God lays upon it for others.

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

68. The crosses of such Souls are the most severe, and God keeps them under the most abject humiliations and a very common and feeble exterior, though they are his delight. Then Jesus Christ communicates Himself in all his states, and the Soul is clothed upon both with his inclinations and sufferings. It understands what man has cost Him, what his faithlessness has made Him suffer, what is the redemption of Jesus Christ, and how He has borne his children.

69. The Transformation is recognized by the want of distinction between God and the Soul, it not being able any longer to separate itself from God; everything is equally God, because it has passed into its Original Source, is reunited to its ALL, and changed into Him. But it is enough for me to sketch the general

outlines of what you desire to know; experience will teach you the rest, and having shown you what I ought to be to you, you may judge of what I am in our Lord.

70. In proportion as its Transformation is perfected, the Soul finds a more extended quality in itself. Everything is expanded and dilated, God making it a partaker of His infinity; so that it often finds itself immense, and the whole earth appears but as a point in comparison with this wonderful breadth and extension. Whatever is in the order and will of God, expands it; everything else contracts it; and this contraction restrains it from passing out. As the Will is the means of effecting the transformation, and the Center is nothing else but all the faculties united in the will, the more the Soul is transformed, the more its will is changed and passed into that of God, and the more God Himself wills for the Soul. The Soul acts and works in this Divine Will, which is thus substituted for its own, so naturally, that it cannot tell whether the will of the Soul is become the Will of God, or the Will of God become the will of the Soul.

71. God frequently exacts strange sacrifices from Souls thus transformed in Him; but it costs them nothing, for they will sacrifice everything to Him without repugnance. The smaller sacrifices cost the most, and the greater ones the least, for they are not required until the Soul is in a state to grant them without difficulty, to which it has a natural tendency. This is what is said of Jesus Christ on his coming into the world; "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." (Psalm xi. 7,8.) As soon as Christ comes into any Soul to become its living principle, He says the same thing of it; He becomes the eternal Priest who unceasingly fulfills within the Soul his sacerdotal office. This is sublime indeed, and continues until the victim is carried to glory.

72. God destines these Souls for the assistance of others in the most tangled paths; for, having no longer any anxiety in regard to themselves, nor anything to lose, God can use them to bring others into the way of his pure, naked and assured Will. Those who are still Self-possessed, could not be used for this purpose; for, not having yet entered into a state where they follow the Will of God blindly for themselves, but always mingling it with their own reasonings, and false wisdom, they are not by any means in a condition to withhold nothing in following it blindly for others. When I say withhold nothing, I mean of that which God desires in the present moment; for He frequently does not permit us to point out to a person all that hinders him, and what we see must come to pass in respect to him, except in general terms, because he cannot bear it. And though we may sometimes say hard things, as Christ did to the Capernaïtes, He nevertheless bestows a secret strength to bear it; at least He does so to the Souls whom He has chosen solely for Himself; and this is the Touchstone.

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