

The Spiritual Guide to the Inward Way

by Miguel de Molinos

The Spiritual Guide to the Inward Way emphasizes the importance of experience, patience, and faith in spiritual growth, and the need to let go of meditation and ratiocination to attain perfection.

Scripture: Psalm 46:10, Romans 8:26, 2 Corinthians 12:9, James 4:8, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Inner Prayer", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Miguel de Molinos preaches about the importance of internal recollection and prayer, emphasizing the need to surrender to God in silence and faith, rejecting the distractions of sensible pleasures and focusing on pure acts of the will and intellect. He highlights the value of enduring temptations and dryness in prayer, as they purify the soul and lead to a deeper union with God. The preacher encourages believers to persevere in internal recollection, embracing the peace that comes from quiet surrender to God's will, and finding joy in the midst of spiritual struggles and afflictions.

Transcript

The

Author to the Reader.

THERE is nothing more difficult, than to please all People, nor more easie and common than to censure Books that come abroad in the World. All Books, without exception, that see the light, run the common Risk of both these inconveniences, though they may be sheltered under the most sublime Protection, what will become of this little Book then, which hath no Patronage? The Subject whereof being mystical, and not well-seasoned; carries along with it the common censure, and will seem insipid? Kind Reader, if you understand it not, be not therefore apt to censure the same.

The Natural Man may hear and read these Spiritual Matters, but he can never comprehend them, as St. Paul saith; (I Cor.c.2) The Natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. If you condemn it, you condemn your self to the number of the wise men of this World, of who St. Denis says, that God imparts not this Wisdom to them, as he does to the simple and humble, though in the opinion of Men they be ignorant.

Mystical Knowledge proceeds not from Wit, but from Experience; it is not invented, but proved; not read, but received; and is therefore most secure and efficacious, of great help and plentiful in fruit; it enters not

(Mat.II.) into the Soul by Ears, nor by the continual Reading of Books, but by the free Infusion of the Holy Ghost, whose Grace with most delightful intimacy, is communicated to the simple and lowly.

There are some Learned Men, who have never read these Matters, and some Spiritual Men that hitherto have hardly relished them and therefore both condemn them, the one out of Ignorance, and the other for want of Experience.

Besides, it is certain, that he who hath not the Experience of this Sweetness, cannot pass a Judgement upon these Mysterious Secrets; nay, rather he'll be Scandalized (as many are) when he hears of the Wonders which the Divine Love is wont to work in Souls, because he finds no such Rarities in his own. Who shall limit the goodness of God, whose Arm is not shortened, but that he can do now what he hath wrought at other times? God calls neither the strongest nor the richest for their Merit; but calls rather the weakest and most wretched, that his infinite Mercy may shine forth the more.

This Science is not Theoretical, but Practical, wherein Experience surpasses the most refined and ingenious Speculation. Hence it was that St. Tiresia admonished her Ghostly Father, that he should not confer about Spiritual Matters, but with Spiritual Men; Because, said she, if they know but one way, or if they have stopped mid-way, there is no success to be expected.

It will soon appear that he hath no experience of this practical and mystical Science, who shall condemn the Doctrine of this Book, and who hath not read St. Dennis, St. Austin, St. Gregory, St. Bernard, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and many other Saints and Doctors approved by the Church, who like expert men, approve, commend, and teach the Practice of this Doctrine.

It is to be taken notice of, that the Doctrine of this Book instructs not all sorts of Persons, but those only who have the Senses and Passions well mortified, who have already advanced and made progress in Prayer, and are called by God to the Inward Way, who encourages and guides them, freeing them from the obstacles which hinder the course to perfect Contemplation.

I have taken care to have the Style of this Book devout, chaste, and useful, without the ornament of polite Sentences, ostentation of Eloquence, or Theological Niceties; my only scope was to teach the Naked Truth, with humility, sincerity and perspicuity.

It is not to be wondered at that new Spiritual Books are every day published in the World, because God hath always new Light to communicate, and Souls stand always in need of these Instructions. All things have not been said, nor every thing written, hence it is that there will be Writing to the end of the World. Wonderful were the Lights that God Almighty communicated to his Church by means of the Angelical Doctor, St. Thomas, and at the hour of his Death, he himself said that the Divine Majesty had at that instant communicated to him so much light, that all he had before written came short of it. God has, then, and always will have new Lights to communicate, without any diminution to his own Infinite Wisdom.

The many and grievous pains and difficulties of the Inward Way ought not to make a Soul despond, because it is but reasonable that a thing of great value should cost dear. Be of good comfort, and believe, that not only those which are here represented, but many others also will be overcome with the Grace of God and internal Fortitude.

It was never my design to treat of Contemplation, nor in defence of it, as many have done who have learnedly and speculatively published whole Books, full of efficacious Reasons, Doctrines and Authorities

of Saints and of the Holy Scripture, for confuting the Opinion of those who without any ground have condemned, and do condemn it.

The Experience of many Years (by reason of the many Souls who have trusted to my insufficiency, for their conduct in the Inward Way, to which they have been called) hath convinced me of the great necessity they are in of having the obstacles taken out of their way, the inclinations, affections and allurements removed, which wholly hinder the course and obstruct the way to perfect Contemplation.

This whole Practical Book tends chiefly to this end, because it is not enough to ascertain the Inward Way of Contemplation, if the obstacles be not taken out of the way of those Souls that are called and assured, which hinder their progress and spiritual flight; For which end I have made use rather of what God out of his infinite mercy hath inspired into me, and taught me, than of any thing that the speculative reading of Books has suggested unto me, or furnished me with.

Sometimes (though very seldom) I quote the Authority of some practical and experienc'd Author, to show that the Doctrine which is here taught is not singular and rare. It hath been my first scope then, not to ascertain the Inward Way but to disentangle and unpester it; My next hath been to instruct the Spiritual Divertors, that they may not stop those Souls in their course which are called by these secret Paths to internal Peace and Supreme Felicity. God of his infinite Mercy grant, that an end so much desired may be obtained.

I hope in God, that some of those Souls, whom his Divine Majesty calls to this knowledge, will find profit from what I have writ; for whose sake I shall reckon my pains very well employed. This has been the only But of my desire, and if God (as certainly he will) accept and approve those pure desires, I shall be content and have my reward.

Farewell

THE

Spiritual Guide,

Which leads the Soul to the fruition of Inward Peace.

The First Book

Of the Darkness, Dryness, and Temptations wherewith God purges Souls, and of Internal Recollection.

CHAP. I.

To the end God may rest in the Soul, the Heart is always to be kept peaceable in whatsoever Disquiet, Temptation and Tribulation.

1. THOU art to know, that thy Soul is the Center, Habitation, and the Kingdom of God. That therefore, to the end the Sovereign King may rest on that Throne of thy Soul, thou ought to take pains to keep it clean, quiet, void and peaceable; clean from guilt and defects; quiet from fears; void of affections, desires, and thoughts; and peaceable in temptations and tribulations.

2. Thou ought always then to keep thine Heart in Peace; that thou may keep pure that Temple of God, and with a right and pure intention, thou art to work, pray, obey and suffer, without being in the least moved, whatever it pleases the Lord to send unto thee. Because it is certain, that for the good of thy Soul, and for thy spiritual Profit, he will suffer the envious enemy to trouble that City of Rest, and Throne of Peace, with temptations, suggestions and tribulations, and by the means of creature, with painful troubles and grievous persecutions.

3. Be constant, and cheer up thine heart in whatsoever disquiet these tribulations may cause to thee. Enter within it, that thou may overcome it; for therein is the Divine Fortress, which defends, protects, and fights for thee. If a man hath a safe Fortress, he is not disquieted, though his enemies pursue him; because, by retreating within it, these are disappointed and overcome. The strong Castle, that will make thee triumph over all thine enemies, visible and invisible, and over all their snares and tribulations, is within thine own Soul, because in it resides the Divine Aid and Sovereign Succour. Retreat within it and all will be quiet, secure, peaceable and calm.

4. It ought to be thy chief and continual exercise, to pacifie that Throne of thy Heart that the Supreme King may rest therein. The way to pacifie it, will be, to enter into thy self by means of internal recollection; all thy protection is to be Prayer and a loving recollection in the Divine Presence. When thou seest thy self more sharply assaulted, retreat into that region of Peace, where thou'lt find the Fortress. When thou are more faint-hearted, betake thy self to this refuge of Prayer, the only Armor for overcoming the enemy, and mitigating tribulation: thou ought not to be at a distance from it in a Storm, to the end thou mayest, as another Noah, experience tranquility, security and serenity, and to the end thy will may be resigned, devout, peaceful and courageous.

5. Finally, be not afflicted nor discouraged to see thy self faint-hearted, he returns to quiet thee, that still he may stir thee, because this Divine Lord will be alone with thee, to rest in thy Soul, and form therein a rich Throne of Peace; that within thine own heart, by means of internal recollection, and with his heavenly Grace, thou may look for silence in tumult, solitude in company, light in darkness, forgetfulness in pressures, vigour in despondency, courage in fear, resistance in temptation, peace in war, and quiet in tribulation.

CHAP. II

Though the Soul perceive it self deprived of Discourse, or Ratiocination, yet it ought to persevere in Prayer, and not be afflicted, because that is its greater Felicity.

6. THOUL'T find thy self, as all other Souls that are called by the Lord to the Inward Way, full of confusion and doubts, because in Prayer thou hast failed in Discourse: It will seem to thee that God does no more

assist thee as formerly, that the exercise of Prayer is not in thy power; that thou lovest time, whilst hardly and with great trouble thou canst make one single Ejaculation as thou wast wont to do.

7. How much confusion, and what perplexities will that want of enlarging thy self in mental Discourse raise in thee? And if in such a juncture thou hast not a ghostly Father, expert in the Mystical Way, thoult certainly conclude that thy Soul is out of order, and that for the security of thy Conscience, thou standest in need of a general confession; and all that will be got by that care, will be the shame and confusion of both. O how many Souls are called to the Inward Way, and the spiritual Fathers for want of Understanding their case, instead of guiding and helping them forwards, stop them in their Course, and ruin them.

8. Thou ought then to be perswaded, that thou may not draw back, when thou wantest expansion and discourse in Prayer; that it is thy greatest happiness, because it is a clear sign, that the Lord will have thee to walk by Faith and Silence in his Divine Presence, which is the most profitable and easiest Path; in respect, that with a simple view, or amorous attention to God, the Soul appears like a humble Suppliant before its Lord, or as an innocent Child, that casts it self into the sweet and safe Bosom of its dear Mother. Thus did Gerson express it, Though I have spent Forty Years in Reading and Prayer, yet I could never find any thing more efficacious, nor compendious, for attaining to Mystical Theology, than that our Spirit should become like a young Child and Beggar in the presence of God.

9. That kind of Prayer is not only the easiest, but the most secure; because it is abstracted from the operations of the Imagination, that is always exposed to the Tricks of the Devil, and the extravagancies of Melancholy, and Ratiocination, wherein the Soul is easily Distracted, and being wrapt up in speculation, reflects on it self.

10. When God had a mind to instruct his own Captain Moses, and give him the two Tablets of the Law (Exod. 24.), written in Stone, he called him up to the Mountain, at what time God being there with him, the Mount was Darkened and environed with thick Clouds, Moses standing idle, not knowing what to think or say. Seven days after God commanded Moses, to come up to the top of the Mountain, where he show'd him his Glory, and filled him with great Consolation.

11. So in the Beginning, when God intends after an extraordinary manner, to guide the Soul into the School of the divine and loving Notices of the internal Law, he makes it go with Darkness, and Dryness, that he may bring it near to himself, because the Divine Majesty knows very well, that it is not by the means of ones own Ratiocination, or Industry, that a Soul draws near to him, and understands the Divine Documents; but rather by silent and humble Resignation.

12. The Patriarch Noah gave a great instance of this; who after he had been by all men reckoned a Fool, floating in the middle of a raging Sea, wherewith the whole World was overflowed, without Sails and Oars; and environed with wild Beasts, that were shut up in the Ark, walked by Faith alone, not knowing nor understanding what God had a mind to do with him.

13. What most concerns thee, O redeemed Soul, is Patience, not to desist from the Prayer thou art about, though thou can'st not enlarge in Discourse. Walk with firm Faith, and a holy Silence, dying in thy self, with all thy natural Industry, trusting that God who is he who is, and changes not; neither can err, intends nothing but thy good. It is clear that he who is at dying, must needs feel it, but how well is time employed, when the Soul is dead, dumb, and resigned in the presence of God, there without any clutter or distraction, to receive the Divine Influences.

14. The Senses are not capable of divine Blessings; hence if thou would be Happy and Wise; be Silent and Believe; Suffer and have Patience; be Confident and Walk on; it concerns thee far more to hold thy Peace, and to let thy self be guided by the hand of God, than to enjoy all the Goods of this World. And though it seem to thee, that thou does nothing at all, and art idle being so Dumb and Resigned; yet it is of infinite fruit.

15. Consider the blinded Beast that turns the Wheel of the Mill, which though it see not, neither know what it does, yet does a great Work in grinding the Corn, and although it taste not of it; yet its Master receives the fruit, and tastes of the same. Who would not think, during so long a time that the Seed lies in the Earth, but that it were lost? Yet afterwards it is seen to spring up, grow and multiply. God does the same with the Soul, when he deprives it of Consideration and Ratiocination: Whil'st it thinks it does nothing, and is, in a manner undone, in time it comes to it self again, improved, disengaged, and perfect, having never hoped for so much favour.

16. Take care then that thou afflict not thy self, nor draw back, though thou can'st not enlarge thy self, and discourse in Prayer; suffer, hold thy peace, and appear in the presence of God; persevere constantly, and trust to his infinite Bounty, who can give unto thee constant Faith, true light, and divine Grace. Walk as if thou were blindfolded, without thinking or reasoning; put thy self into his kind and paternal hands, resolving to do nothing but what his divine Will and Pleasure is.

CHAP. III

A Sequel of the same Matter.

17. IT is the common opinion of all the holy Men who have treated of the Spirit, and of all the Mystical Matters: That the Soul cannot attain to perfection and an union with God, by means of Meditation, and Ratiocination: Because that is only good for beginning the spiritual Way, to the end one may acquire a habit of Knowledge, of the beauty of Vertue, and ugliness of Vice: which habit in the opinion of Saint Teresa, may be attained to in Six Months time and according to S. Bonaventure(In prol. de Mist. Theol. page 655) in two.

18. O how are, in a manner infinite numbers of Souls to be pitied, who from the beginning of their Life to the end, employ themselves in meer Meditation, constraining themselves to Reason, although God Almighty deprive them of Ratiocination, that he may promote them to another State, and carry them on a more perfect kind of Prayer, and so for many years they continue imperfect, and in the beginning, without any progress or having as yet made one step in the way of the Spirit; beating their Brains about the frame of the Place, the choice of the Minutes, Imaginations, and strained Reasonings, seeking God without, when in the mean time, they have him within themselves.

19. St. Austin (Soliloq. C. 31) complained of that, in the time when God led him to the Mystical Way, saying to his Divine Majestie, I, Lord, went wandering like a strayed Sheep, seeking thee with anxious Reasoning without, whil'st thou wast within me, I wearied my self much in looking for thee without and yet thou hast thy habitation within me; If I long and breathe after thee, I went round the Streets and Places of the City of this World, seeking thee and found thee not; because, in vain I sought without for him, what was within my self.

20. The Angelical Doctor St. Thomas, for all he was so circumspect in his Writings, may seem yet to jeer those, who go always in search of God without, by means of Ratiocination, when they have him present within themselves. There is great Blindness, and excessive Folly in some, (says the Saint - Ocuſe. 6. C. 3. infin.) who always seek God, continually sigh after God, often long for God, invoke and call upon God daily in Prayer; they themselves (according to the Apostle) being the living Temple of God, and his true Habitation, since their Soul is the Seat and Throne of God, where he continually rests. Who then, but a Fool, will look for an Instrument abroad, when he knows he has it fast shut up within Doors? Or who can refresh himself with the Food he desires, and yet not taste it? Such exactly is the Life of some just men, always seeking, and never enjoying, and therefore all their Works are imperfect.

21. It is certain, that Our Lord Christ taught Perfection to all, and ever will have all to be Perfect, particularly the Ignorant and Simple. He clearly manifested this Truth, when for his Apostles, he chose the Smallest and most Ignorant, saying (Matth. II.) to his Eternal Father, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes. And it is certain, that these cannot acquire Perfection, by acute Meditations, and subtle Reasonings, though they be as capable as the most Learned, to attain to Perfection, by the affections of the Will, wherein principally it consists.

22. St. Bonaventure, teaches us not to form Conceptions of any thing, no not of God, because it is Imperfection to make Representations, Images, and Ideas, how subtle or ingenious soever, either of the Will, or of the Goodness, Trinity, and Unity; nay, of the Divine Presence it self: In respect that, though all these Representations appear Deiform, yet are they not God, who admits of no Image, nor Form. Non ibi (says the Saint - Mist. Theol. p.2., Vn. p. 685.) oportet cogitare res de creaturis nec de, Angelis, nec de Trinitate, quia hæc sapientia per affectus desideriorum, non per meditationem, præviam debet consurgere. We must not here think any thing of Creature, of Angels, nor of God himself, because that Wisdom and Perfection, is not acquired by nice and quaint Meditation, but by the desire and affection of the Will.

23. The holy man cannot speak more clearly; and thou would'st disquiet thy self, and leave off Prayer, because thou know'st not, or can'st not tell how to enlarge therein, though thou may'st have a good Will, good Desire, and pure Intention? If the young Ravens forsaken of the old, because seeing them without Black Feathers, they think them Spurious, are by the Dew of Heaven fed that they may not perish; what will he do to redeem Souls, though they cannot speak nor reason, if they believe, trust, and open their Mouths to Heaven, declaring their wants: Is it not more certain that the Divine Bounty will provide for them, and give them their necessary Food?

24. Manifest it is, that it is a great Martyrdom, and no small Gift of God, for the Soul, finding it self deprived of the sensible Pleasures it had, to walk by holy Faith only, through the dark, and desert Paths of Perfection, to which, notwithstanding, it can never attain but by this painful, though secure means. Wherefore endeavour to be constant, and not draw back, though Discourse be wanting to thee in Prayer, believe at that time firmly, be quietly silent, and patiently persevere if thou wouldest be happy, and attain to the Divine Union, eminent rest, and to the Supream Internal Peace.

CHAP. IV.

The Soul is not to afflict it self, nor intermit Prayer, because it sees it self encompassed with dryness.

25. THOU shalt know that there are two sorts of Prayer, the one tender, delightful, amicable, and full of sentiments; the other obscure, dry, desolate, tempted, and darksome. The first is of Beginners, the second of Proficients, who are in the progress to Perfection. God gives the first to gain Souls, the second to purifie them. With the first he uses them like Children; with the second he begins to deal with them as with strong men.

26. This first Way may be called the Animal Life, and belongs to them who go in the tract of the sensible Devotion, which God uses to give to Beginners, to the end that being endowed with that small relish, as the natural man is with the sensible Object, they may addict themselves to the spiritual Life. The second is called the Life of men, and belongs to those, who not minding sensible Pleasures, fight and war against their own Passions, that they may conquer and obtain Perfection, the proper employment of men.

27. Assure thy self, that dryness or aridity is the Instrument of thy Good, because it is nothing else but a want of sensibility, that Remora, which puts a stop to the flight of almost all Spiritual Men, and makes them even draw back, and leave off Prayer: as may be seen in many Souls, which only persevere whilst they taste sensible Consolation.

28. Know that the Lord makes use of the Veil of Dryness, to the end we may not know what he is working in us, and so be humble; because if we felt and knew what he is working in our Souls, satisfaction and presumption would get in, imagining that we were doing some good thing, and reckoning our selves very near to God; which would be our undoing.

29. Lay this down as a firm ground in thine Heart, that for walking in the Inward Way, all sensibilitie should first be removed; and that the means God uses for that is dryness. By that also he takes away reflection, or that view, whereby the Soul Eyes what it is doing, the only impediment that obstructs the advancing forward, and God communicating himself, and operating in it.

30. Thou oughtest not then to afflict thy self, nor think that thou reapest no fruit, because in coming from a Communion or Prayer, thou hast not the experience of many sentiments, since that is a manifest Cheat. The Husbandman Sows in one time and Reaps in another: So God, upon occasions, and in his own due time, will help them to resist Temptations, and when least thou thinkest, will give thee holy purposes, and more effectual desires of serving him. And to the end, thou mayest not suffer thy self to be transported, by the violent suggestion of the Enemy, who will enviously perswade thee, that thou do'st nothing, and that thou lovest time, that so thou mayest neglect Prayer: I'll declare to thee some of the infinite fruits, that thy Soul reaps from that great dryness.

31. The first is to persevere in Prayer, from which fruit springs many other advantages.

II. Thou'lt find a loathing of the things of the World, which by little and little tends to the stifling of the bad desires of thy past Life, and the production of other new ones of serving God.

III. Thou'lt reflect upon many failings on which formerly thou didst not reflect.

IV. Thou'lt find, when thou are about to commit any evil, an advertency in thy Heart, which restrains thee from the execution of it, and at other times from Speaking, Lamenting, or Revenging thy self; that'll take thee off from some little earthy Pleasure, or from this or t'other Occasion, or Conversation, into which formerly thou was running in great Peace and Security, without the least Check or Remorse of Conscience.

V. After that through frailty, thou hast fallen in to some light fault, thou'lt feel a Reproof for it in thy Soul, which will exceeding afflict thee.

VI. Thou'lt feel within thy self, desires of suffering, and of doing the will of God.

VII. An inclination to Virtue, and greater ease in overcoming thy self, and conquering the difficulties of the Passions, and Enemies that hinder thee in the way.

VIII. Thou'lt know thy self better, and be confounded also in thy self, feel in thee a high esteem of God above all created Beings, a contempt of Creatures, and a firm Resolution not to abandon Prayer, though thou knowest that it will prove to thee a most cruel Martyrdom.

IX. Thou'lt be sensible of greater Peace in thy Soul, love to Humility, confidence in God, submission, and abstraction from all Creatures; and finally the Sins thou hast omitted since the time that thou exercised thy self in Prayer, are so many signs, that the Lord is working in thy Soul, (though thou knowest it not) by means of dry Prayer; and although thou feelest it not whilst thou art in prayer, thou'lt feel it in his due time, when he shall think it fit.

32. All these and many other fruits are like new Buds that spring from the Prayer, which thou would'st give over, because it seems to thee to be dry, that thou seest no Fruit of it, nor reapest no advantage therefrom. Be constant and persevere with Patience, for though thou knowest it not, thy Soul is profited thereby.

CHAP. V.

Treating of the same thing, declaring how many ways of Devotion there are, and how the sensible Devotion is to be disposed; and that the Soul is not idle, though it reason not.

33. THERE are to be found two sorts of Devotion, the one essential and true; the other accidental and sensible. The essential, is a promptitude of mind to do well, (1) (S.Thom.2.2.q.82.art.1.) fulfil the commands of God, and to perform all things belonging to his service, though, through human frailty, all be not actually done as is desired. (2) (Suar.t.2.de.Pel.l.2.c.6.n.16&18.) This is true Devotion, though it be not accompanied with pleasure, sweetness, delight, nor tears, but rather it is usually attended with temptation, dryness, and darkness.

34. Accidental and sensible Devotion is, (3) (St.Bern.Ser.l.de Nat.Dom.Suarez in Molin de Oration. c.6.) when good desires are attended with a pleasant softness of heart, tenderness of tears, or other sensible affections. This is not to be sought after, nay, it is rather more secure to wean the will from it, and to set light by it; because besides that it is usually dangerous, it is a great obstacle to progress, and the advancement in the Internal Way. And therefore we ought only to embrace the true and essential Devotion, which is always in our power to come by, seeing every one doing his duty may with the assistance of the Divine Grace acquire it. And this may be had with God, with Christ, with the Mysteries, with the Virgin, and with the Saints.

35. Some think that when Devotion and sensible Pleasure are given them, they are Favours of God, that thence forward they have him, and that the whole life is to be spent in breathing after that delight; but it is a cheat, because it is no more, but a consolation of nature, and a pure reflexion, wherewith the Soul beholds

what it does, and hinders the doing, or possibility of doing any thing, the acquisition of the true light, and the making of one step in the way of perfection. The Soul is a pure Spirit and is not felt; and so the internal acts, and of the will, as being the acts of the Soul and spiritual, are not sensible: Hence the Soul knows not if it liveth, nor, for most part, is sensible if it acteth.

36. From this thou mayest infer, that that Devotion and sensible Pleasure, is not God, not Spirit, but the product of Nature; that therefore thou oughtest to set light by, and despise it, but firmly to persevere in Prayer, leaving thy self to the conduct of God, who will be to thee light in aridity and darkness.

37. Think not that when thou art dry and darksome in the presence of God, with faith and silence, that thou do'st nothing, that thou lovest time, and that thou are idle, because not to wait on God, according to the saying of St. Bernard (Tom.5.in Fract. de vit. solit.c.8.p. 90.), is the greatest idleness:Otiosum non est vacare Deo; inimo negotiorum omnium hoc est; And elsewhere he sayeth, that that idleness of the Soul is the business of the businesses of God. Hoc negotium magnum est negotium.

38. It is not to be said, that the Soul is idle; because though it operate not Actively, yet the Holy Ghost operates in it. Besides that, it is not without all activity, because it operates, though spiritually, simply, and intimately. For to be attentive to God, draw near to him, to follow his internal Inspirations, receive his divine Influences, adore him in his own intimate center, reverence him with the pious Affections of the Will, to cast away so many and so fantastical imaginations, and with softness and contempt to overcome so many temptations: all these, I say, are true acts though simple, wholly spiritual, & in a manner imperceptible, through the great tranquility, wherewith the Soul exerts them.

CHAP. VI.

The Soul is not to be disquieted, that is sees it self encompassed with Darkness, because that is an Instrument of its greater Felicity.

39. THERE are two sorts of Darkness: some unhappy, and others happy : the first are such as arise from sin, and are unhappy, because they lead the Christian to an eternal precipice. The second are those which the Lord suffers to be in the Soul, to ground and settle it in vertue; and these are happy, because they enlighten it, fortifie it, and cause greater light therein, so that thou oughtest not to grieve and disturb thy self, nor be disconsolate in seeing thy self obscure and darksome, judging that God hath failed thee, and the light also that thou formerly had the experience of; thou oughtest rather at that time persevere constantly in Prayer, it being a manifest sign, that God of his infinite mercy intends to bring thee into the inward path, and happy way of Paradise. O how happy wilt thou be, if thou embrace it with Peace and Resignation, as the instrument of perfect Quiet, true Light, & of all thy spiritual Good.

40. Know then that the streightest, most perfect and secure way of proficients, is the way of darkness: because in them the Lord placed his own Throne; And (Psalm 18.) He made darkness his secret place. By them the supernatural Light which God infuses into the Soul, grows and increases. Amidst them Wisdom and strong Love are begotten, by darkness the soul is annihilated, and the species, which hinder the right view of the divine Truth, are consumed. By this means God introduces the Soul by the Inward Way into the Prayer of Rest, and of perfect Contemplation, which so few have the experience of. Finally; by darkness the Lord purgest the senses and sensibility, which hinder the mystical progress.

41. See now if darkness be not to be esteemed and embraced. What thou oughtest to do amidst them, is to believe, that thou art before the Lord, and in his Presence; but thou oughtest to do so, with a sweet and quiet Attention; not desire to know any thing, nor search after delicacies, tenderness or sensible devotions, nor do any thing but what is the good Will and Pleasure of God; Because otherwise thou wilt only make circles, all thy life time, and not advance one step toward Perfection.

CHAP. VII.

To the end the Soul may attain to the supreme Internal Peace, it is necessary, that God purge it after his Way, because the exercises and mortifications that of it self it sets about, are not sufficient.

42. SO soon as thou shalt firmly resolve to mortifie thy external senses, that thou may'st advance towards the high mountain of Perfection, and Union with God; His divine Majesty will set his hand to the purging of thy evil inclinations, inordinate desires, vain complacency, self-love and pride, and other hidden vices, which thou knowest not, and yet reign in the inner parts of thy Soul, and hinder the Divine Union.

43. Thou'lt never attain to this happy state, though thou tire thy self out with the external acts of Mortifications and Resignation, until this Lord purge thee inwardly, and discipline thee, after his own way, because he alone knows how secret faults are to be purged out. If thou persevere constantly, he'll not only purge thee from affections and engagements to natural and temporal goods, but in his own time also he will purifie thee with the supernatural and sublime, such as are internal Communications; inward Raptures and Extasies, and other infused Graces, on which the Soul rests and enjoys it self.

44. God will do all this in thy Soul by means of the cross, and dryness, if thou freely giveth thy consent to it by resignation, and walking through those darksom and desert ways. All thou hast to do, is to do nothing by thy own choice alone. The subjection of thy liberty, is that which thou oughtest to do, quietly resigning thy self up in every thing whereby the Lord shall think fit internally and externally to mortifie thee: because that is the only means, by which thy Soul can become capable of the divine influences, whil'st thou sufferest internal and external Tribulation, with Humility, Patience, and Quiet; not the Penances, Disciplines and Mortifications, which thou couldest impose upon thy self.

45. The Husbandman sets a greater esteem upon the plants which he sows in the Ground, than those that spring up of themselves, because these never come to seasonable maturity. In the same manner God esteems and is better pleased with the vertue, which he sows and infuses into the Soul (as being sunk into its own nothingness, calm and quiet, retreated within its own center, and without any election) than all the other vertues which the Soul pretends to acquire by its own election and endeavours.

46. It concerns thee only then, to prepare thine heart, like clean paper, wherein the Divine Wisdom may imprint characters to his own liking. O how great a work will it be for thy Soul to be whole hours together in Prayer, dumb, resigned, and humble, without acting, knowing, or desiring to understand any thing.

CHAP. VIII.

A Sequel of the same.

47. WITH new efforts thoult exercise thy self, but in another manner than hitherto, giving thy consent to receive the secret and divine Operations, and to be polished, and purified by this Lord, which is the only means whereby thou wilt become clean & purged from thine ignorance and dissolutions. Know, however, that thou art to be plunged in a bitter sea of sorrows, and of internal and external pains, which torment will pierce into the most inward part of thy Soul and Body.

48. Thoult experience, that the creatures will forsake thee, nay, those too from which thou hoped'st for most Favour and Compassion in thy streights; the brooks of thy faculties will be so dried up, that thou shalt not be able to form any ratiocination, nay, nor so much as to conceive a good thought of God. Heaven will seem to thee to be of brass, and thou shalt receive no light from it. Nor will the thought comfort thee, that in times past so much light and devout consolation have rained into thy Soul.

49. The invisible enemies will pursue thee with scruples, lascivious suggestions, and unclean thoughts, with incentives to impatience, pride, rage, cursing and blaspheming the Name of God, his Sacraments, and holy Mysteries. Thoult find a great lukewarmness, loathing, and wearisomness for the things of God; and obscurity and darkness in thy understanding; a faintness, confusion and narrowness of heart; such a coldness and feebleness of the will to resist, that a straw will appear to thee a beam. Thy desertion will be so great, that thoult think there is no more a God for thee, and that thou art rendered incapable of entertaining a good desire: so that thoult continue shut up betwixt two walls, in constant streights and anguish, without any hopes of ever getting out of so dreadful an oppression.

50. But fear not: all this is necessary for purging thy Soul, and making it know its own misery, and sensibly perceive the annihilation of all the passions, and disordinate appetites, wherewith it rejoyced it self. Finally, to the end the Lord may refine and purifie thee after his own manner with those inward torments, wilt thou not cast the Jonas of sense into the sea, that thereby thou mayest procure it? With all thy outward disciplines and mortifications, thoult never have true light, nor make one step towards perfection: so that thou wilt stop in the beginning, and thy Soul will not attain to the amiable rest, and supream internal peace.

CHAP. IX.

The Soul ought not to be disquieted, nor draw back in the Spiritual Way, because it finds it self assaulted by Temptations.

51. OUR own nature is so base, proud and ambitious, and so full of its own appetites, its own judgements and opinions, that if temptations restrained it not, it would be undone without remedy. The Lord then seeing our Misery and perverse inclination, and thereby moved to compassion, suffers us to be assaulted by divers thoughts against the Faith, horrible temptations, and by violent and painful suggestions of impatience, pride, gluttony, luxury, rage, blasphemy, cursing, despair, and an infinite number of others, to the end we may know our selves and be humble. With these horrible temptations, that infinite goodness humbles our pride, giving us in them the most wholesome medicine.

52. All our righteousness (as Isaiah saith) are as filthy rags, (Chap. 64. 6.) through the stains of vanity, conceitedness, and self-love. It is necessary they be purified with the fire of tribulation and temptation, that so they may be clean, pure, perfect and agreeable to the eyes of God.

53. Therefore the Lord purifies the Soul which he calls, and will have for himself, with the rough file of temptation, with which he polishes it from the rust of pride, avarice, vanity, ambition, presumption, and self-conceitedness. With the same, he humbles, pacifies and exercises it, making it to know its own misery. By means thereof he purifies and strips the heart to the end all its operations may be pure, and of inestimable value.

54. Many Souls when they suffer these painful torments, are troubled, afflicted, and disquieted, it seeming to them, that they begin already in this life to suffer eternal punishments; and if by misfortune they go to an unexperienced Confessor, instead of comforting them, he leaves them in greater confusion and perplexities.

55. That thou mayest not lose internal peace, it is necessary thou believe, that it is the goodness of divine mercy, when thus it humbles, afflicts and trys thee; since by that means thy Soul comes to have a deep knowledge of itself, reckoning it self the worst, most impious and abominable of all Souls living, and hence with humility and lowliness it abhors it self. O how happy would Souls be, if they would be quiet and believe, that all these temptations are caused by the Devil, and received from the hand of God, for their gain and spiritual profit.

56. But thou'lt say, that it is not the work of the Devil, when he molests thee by means of creatures, but the effect of thy neighbours fault and malice, in having wronged and injured thee. Know that that is another cunning and hidden temptation, because though God wills not the sin of another, yet he wills his own effect in thee, and the trouble which accrues to thee from another's fault, that he may see thee emproved by the benefit of patience.

57. Doest thou receive an injury from any man? there are two things in it, the sin of him that does it, and the punishment that thou sufferest; the sin is against the will of God, and displeases him, though he permit it; the punishment is conformed to his will, and he wills it for thy good, wherefore thou oughtest to receive it, as from his hand. The Passion and Death of our Lord Christ, were the effects of the wickedness and sins of Pilate, and yet it is certain, that God willed the death of his own Son for our redemption.

58. Consider how the Lord makes use of another's fault for the good of thy Soul. O the greatness of the Divine Wisdom, who can pry into the depth of the secret and extraordinary means, and the hidden paths whereby he guides the Soul, which he would have purged, transformed and deified.

CHAP. X.

Wherein the same Point is handled.

59. THAT the Soul may be the habitation of the celestial King, it is necessary, that it should be pure and without any blemish; wherefore the Lord purifies it as gold in the furnace of terrible and grievous temptations. Certain it is, that the Soul never loves, nor believes more, than when it is afflicted and baited with such temptations; because those doubtings and fears that beset it, whether it believe or not; whether it consent or not, are nothing else but the quaintnesses of love.

60. The effects that remain in the Soul make this very clear; and commonly these are a loathing of it self with a most profound acknowledgment of the greatness and omnipotence of God, a great confidence in the Lord, that he will deliver it from all risk and danger; believing and confessing with far greater vigour of

faith, that it is God who gives it strength to bear the torments of these temptations, because it would naturally be impossible, considering the force and violence wherewith sometimes they attack, to resist one quarter of an hour.

61. Thou art to know then, that temptation is thy great happiness, so that the more it besets thee, the more thou oughtest to rejoyce in Peace, instead of being sad, and thank God for the favour he does thee. In all these temptations, and odious thoughts, the remedy that is to work, is to despise them with a stayed neglect, because nothing more afflicts the proud Devil, than to see that he is slighted and despised, as are all things else that he suggests to us. And therefore thou art to tarry with him, as one that perceives him not, and to possess thy self in thy peace without repining, and without multiplying Reasons and Answers; seeing nothing is more dangerous, than to vie in reasons with him who is ready to deceive thee.

62. The Saints in arriving at holiness, passed through this doleful valley of temptation, and the greater Saints they were, the greater temptations they grappled with. Nay after the Saints have attained to holiness and perfection; the Lord suffers them to be tempted with brisk temptations, that their Crown may be the greater, and that the spirit of Vain-glory may be checked, or else hindred from entring in them, keeping them in that manner secure, humble, and solicitous of their condition.

63. Finally thou art to know, that the greatest Temptation is to be without Temptation; wherefore thou oughtest to be glad when it assaults thee, and with Resignation, Peace and Constancy resist it: Because if thou wilt serve God, and arrive at the sublime Region of Internal Peace; thou must pass through that rugged Path of Temptation; put on that heavy Armor; fight in that fierce and cruel War, and in that burning Furnace, polish, purge, renew, and purifie thy self.

CHAP. XI.

Declaring the Nature of internal Recollection, and instructing the Soul how it ought to behave it self therein, and in the Spiritual Welfare, whereby the Devil endeavours to disturb it at that time.

64. INTERNAL Recollection is Faith, and Silence in the Presence of God. Hence thou oughtest to be accustomed to recollect thy self in his Presence, with an affectionate attention, as one that is given up to God, and united unto him, with Reverence, Humility and Submission, beholding him in the most inward recess of thine own Soul, without Form, Likeness, Manner, or Figure; in the view and general nature of a loving and obscure Faith, without any distinction of Perfection or Attribute.

65. There thou art to be with attention, and a sincere regard, with a sedate heedfulness, and full of Love towards the same Lord, resigning and delivering thy self up into his hands, to the end he may dispose of thee, according to his good Will and Pleasure; without reflecting on thy self; nay, nor on Perfection it self. Here thou art to shut up the Senses, trusting God with all the care of thy Welfare, and minding nothing of the affairs of this Life. Finally, thy Faith ought to be pure, without Representations or Likeness: Simple without Reasonings, and Universal without Distinctions.

66. The Prayer of Internal Recollection may be well typified by that Wrestling, which the holy Scripture says, the Patriarch Jacob had all Night with God, until Day broke, and he Blessed him. Wherefore the Soul is to persevere, and wrestle with the difficulties that it will find in internal Recollection, without desisting, until the Son of internal Light begin to appear, and the Lord give it his Blessing.

67. No sooner wilt thou have given thy self up to thy Lord in this Inward Way, but all Hell will conspire against thee, seeing one single Soul inwardly retired to its own Presence, makes greater War against the Enemy, than a thousand others that walk externally; because the Devil makes an infinite advantage of an internal Soul.

68. In the time of the recollection, Peace and Resignation of thy Soul, God will more esteem the various impertinent, troublesome and ugly thoughts that thou hast, than the good purposes, and high sentiments. Know that the effort, which thou thy self mayest make to resist Thoughts, is an impediment, and will leave thy Soul in greater anxietie. The best thing that is to be done, is sweetly to dispise them, to know thine own wretchedness, and peacefully make an Offering to God of the Trouble.

69. Though thou canst not get rid of the anguish of Thoughts, hast no Light, Comfort, nor spiritual Sentiment: Yet be not afflicted, neither leave off recollection, because they are the Snares of the Enemy: Resign thy self at the time with Vigour, endure with Patience, and persevere in his Presence; for whilst thou perseverest after that manner, thy Soul will be internally improved.

70. Doest thou believe that when thou comest away from Prayer dry, in the same manner as thou began it; that that was because of want of Preparation, and that hath done thee no good: That is a Fallacy: Because the fruit of true Prayer consists not in enjoying the Light, nor in having Knowledge of spiritual things, since these may be found in a speculative Intellect, without true Virtue and Perfection; it only consists in enduring with Patience, and persevering in Faith and Silence, believing that thou art in the Lord's Presence, turning to him thy Heart with tranquillity, and purity of Mind. So whilst thou perseverest in this manner, thou'lt have the only Preparation and disposition which at that time is necessary, and shalt reap infinite fruit.

71. War is very usual in this internal Recollection, which on the one hand will deprive thee of sensibility, to try, humble, and purge thee. On the other, invisible Enemies will assault thee with continual Suggestions, to trouble and disquiet thee. Nature her self, apparently, will torment thee, she being always an Enemy to the Spirit, which in depriving her of sensible Pleasures, remains Weak, Melancholy, and full of Irksomness, so that it feels a Hell in all Spiritual Exercises, particularly in that of Prayer, hence it grows extreemly impatient to be at an end of it, through the uneasiness of Thoughts, the lassitude of Body, importunate Sleep, and the not being able to curb the Senses, every one of which would for its own share, follow its own Pleasure. Happy art thou if thou canst persevere amidst this Martyrdom!

72. That great Doctoress, and Mystical Mistress, Santa Teresa, confirms all this by her heavenly Doctrine, in the Letter she wrote to the Bishop of Osmia, to instruct him, how he was to behave himself in Prayer, and in the variety of troublesome thoughts, which attack us at that time, where she says (8. Of her Epistolary.): There is a necessity of suffering the trouble of a Troop of Thoughts, importune Imaginations, and the impetuosities of natural Notions, not only, of the Soul through the dryness and disunion it hath, but of the Body also, occasioned by the want of submission to the Spirit, which it ought to have.

73. These are called drynesses in Spirituals, but are very profitable, if they be embraced and suffered with Patience. Who so shall accustom himself to suffer them without repining, will from that labour draw vast advantage. It is certain, that in recollection the Devil frequently charges the Soul more fiercely with a Battalion of Thoughts, to discomfit the quiet of the Soul, and alienate it from that most sweet and secure internal Conversation, raising horrors, to the end it may leave it off, reducing it most commonly to such a state, as if it were lead forth to a most rigorous Torment.

74. The Birds, which are the Devils, knowing this (said the Saint in the above cited Letter) prick and molest the Soul with Imaginations, troublesome Thoughts, and the Interruptions which the Devil at that time brings in, transporting the Thought, distracting it from one thing to another, and after he hath done with them attacking the Heart, and it is no small fruit of Prayer, patiently to suffer these Troubles and Importunities. That is an offering up of ones self, in a whole burnt Sacrifice, that's to say, to be wholly consumed in the Fire of Temptation, and no part spared. See, how this heavenly Mistress encourages to suffer and endure Thoughts and Temptations; because, provided they be not consented to, they double the profit.

75. As many times as thou exercisest thy self, calmly to reject these vain Thoughts, so many Crowns will the Lord set upon thy Head, and though it may seem to thee that thou dost nothing, be undeceiv'd, for a good desire with firmness and stedfastness in Prayer, is very pleasing to the Lord.

76. Wherefore to be there (concludes the Saint) without sensible profit, is not lost time; but of great gain, whil'st one toyls without Interest, and meerly for the glory of God; and though it may seem to be toying in vain, yet it is not so, but it is as with Children, who toyl and labour under the power of their Father: though in the evening they receive not the wages for their day's work, yet at the year's end they enjoy all. In fine, you see how the Saint confirms our document with her precious Doctrine.

CHAP. XII.

A Sequel of the same Matter.

77. GOD loves not him who does most, who hears most, nor who shows greatest affection, but who suffers most, if he pray with faith and reverence, believing that he is in the divine presence. The truth is to take from the Soul the prayer of the Senses, and of Nature, is a rigorous martyrdom to it, but the Lord rejoices, and is glad in its peace, if it be thus quiet and resigned. Use not at that time vocal Prayer, because however it be good and holy in it self, yet to use it then, is a manifest temptation, whereby the enemy pretends, that God speaks not to thy heart, under pretext that thou had not sentiments, and that thou lovest time.

78. God hath no regard to the multitude of words, but to the purity of the intent. His greatest content and glory at that time, is to see the Soul in silence, desirous, humble, quiet, and resigned. Proceed, persevere, pray, and hold thy peace; for where thou findest not a sentiment, thou'lt find a door whereby thou mayest enter into thine own nothingness; knowing thy self to be nothing, that thou can'st do nothing, nay, and that thou hast not so much as a good thought.

79. How many have begun this happy practice of Prayer, and Internal Recollection, and have left it off, pretending that they feel no pleasure, that they lose time, that their thoughts trouble them, and that that Prayer is not for them, whil'st they find not any sentiment of God, nor any ability to reason or discourse; whereas they might have believed, been silent, and had patience. All this is no more, but with ingratitude to hunt after sensible pleasures, suffering themselves to be transported with self-love, seeking themselves, and not God, because they cannot suffer a little pain and dryness, without reflecting on the infinite loss they sustain, whereas by the least act of reverence towards God, amidst dryness and sterility, they receive an eternal reward.

80. The Lord told the venerable Mother Francesca Lopez of Valenza, and a religious of the third Order of St. Francis, three things of great light and consequence in order to internal recollection. In the first place, that a quarter of an hour of Prayer, with recollection of the senses and faculties, and with resignation and humility, does more good to the Soul than five days of penitential exercises, hair cloaths, disciplines, fastings, and sleeping on bare boards, because these are only mortifications of the body, and with recollection the Soul is purified.

81. Secondly, That it is more pleasing to the Divine Majesty, to have the Soul in quiet and devout Prayer for the space of an hour, than to go in great Pilgrimages; because that in Prayer it does good to it self, and to those for whom it prays, gives delight to God, and merits a high degree of glory, but in pilgrimage, commonly, the Soul is distracted, and the Senses diverted, with a debilitation of vertue, besides many other dangers.

82. Thirdly, That constant Prayer was to keep the Heart always right towards God, and that a Soul to be internal, ought rather to act with the affection of the Will, than the toyl of the Intellect. All this is to be read in her Life.

83. The more the Soul rejoyces in sensible love, the less delight God has in it; on the contrary, the less the Soul rejoyces in this sensible love, the more God delights in it. And know that to fix the Will on God, restraining thoughts and temptations, with the greatest tranquillity possible, is the highest pitch of Praying.

84. I'll conclude this Chapter by undeceiving thee of the vulgar error of those who say, that in this internal Recollection, or Prayer of Rest, the faculties operate not, and that the Soul is idle and wholly unactive. This is a manifest fallacy of those who have little experience, because although it operate not by means of the memory, nor by the second operation of the Intellect, which is the judgment, nor by the third, which is discourse or ratiocination, yet it operates by the first and chief operation of the intellect, which is simple apprehension, enlightened by holy Faith, and aided by the divine gifts of the holy Spirit. And the Will is more apt to continue one act, than to multiply many; so that as well the act of the Intellect, as that of the Will are so simple, imperceptible, and spiritual, that hardly the Soul knows them, and far less reflects upon them.

CHAP. XIII.

What the Soul ought to do in Internal Recollection.

85. THOU oughtest to go to Prayer, that thou mayest deliver thy self wholly up into the hands of God, with perfect resignation, exerting an act of Faith, believing that thou art in the divine Presence, afterwards settling in that holy repose, with quietness, silence and tranquility; and endeavouring for a whole day, a whole year, and thy whole life to continue that first act of Contemplation, by faith and love.

86. It is not your businesses to multiply these acts, nor to repeat sensible affections, because they hinder the Purity of the spiritual and perfect act of the Will, whilst besides that these sweet sentiments are imperfect, (considering the reflection wherewith they are made, the self-content, and external consolation wherewith they are sought after, the Soul being drawn outwards to the external faculties) there is no necessity of renewing them, as the mystical Falcon hath excellently expressed it by the following similitude.

87. If a Jewel given to a friend were once put into his hands, it is not necessary to repeat such a donation already made, by daily telling him, (Sir, I give you that Jewel, Sir, I give you that Jewel,) but to let him keep it, and not take it from him, because provided he take it not, or design not to take it from him, he hath surely given it him.

88. In the same manner, having once dedicated, and lovingly resigned thy self to the will of God, there is nothing else for thee to do, but to continue the same, without repeating new and sensible acts, provided thou takest not back the Jewel thou hast once given, by committing some notable fault against his divine Will, tho thou oughtest still to exercise thy self outwardly in the external works of thy calling and state, for in so doing thou dost the Will of God, and walkest in continual and virtual oration: He always prays (said Theophylact) who does good works, nor does he neglect Prayer, but when he leaves off to be just.

89. Thou oughtest then to slight all those sensibilities, to the end thy Soul may be established, and acquire a habit of internal recollection which is so effectual, that the resolution only of going to Prayer, awakens a lively presence of God, which is the preparation to the Prayer that is about to be made; or to say better, is no other than a more efficacious continuation of continual Prayer, wherein the contemplative person ought to be settled.

90. O how well did the venerable Mother of Cantal, the spiritual daughter of St. Francis of Sales, practice this Lesson, in whose Life are the following words, written to her Master: Most dear Father, I cannot do any act, it seems to me always that this is the most firm and secure disposition: my spirit in the upper part, is in a most simple unity; it is not united, because when it would perform acts of union (which it often sets about) it finds difficulty, and clearly perceives that it cannot unite, but be united. The Soul would make use of this union, for the service of Mattins, the holy Mass, preparation for the Communion, and thanksgiving; and in a word, it would for all things be always in that most simple unity of spirit, without reflecting on any thing else. To all this the holy Father answered with approbation, perswading her to persist, and putting her in mind, that the repose of God is in peace.

91. Another time she wrote to the same Saint these words: Endeavouring to do some more special acts of my simple intuition, total resignation and annihilation in God, his divine goodness rebuked me, and gave me to understand, that that proceeded only from the love of my self, and that thereby I offended my Soul.

92. By this thou wilt be undeceived, and know what is the perfect and spiritual way of Praying, and be advised what is to be done in Internal recollection: Thou'lt know that to the end Love may be perfect and pure, it is expedient to retrench the multiplication of sensible and fervent Acts, the Soul continuing quiet and resting in that inward Silence. Because, tenderness, delight, and sweet sentiments, which the Soul experiences in the Will, are not pure Spirits, but Acts blended with the sensibility of Nature. Nor is it perfect Love, but sensible Pleasure, which distracts and hurts the Soul, as the Lord told the venerable Mother of Cantal.

93. How happy and how well applied will thy Soul be, if retreating within it self, it there shrink into its own nothing, both in its Center and superiour Part, without minding what it does; whether it recollect or not, whether it walk well or ill; if it operate or not, without heeding, thinking, or minding any sensible thing? At that time the Intellect believes with a pure Act, and the Will loves with perfect love, without any kind of impediment, imitating that pure and continued Act of Intuition and Love, which the Saints say the Blessed in Heaven have, with no other difference, than that they see one another there Face to Face, and the Soul here, through the Veil of an obscure Faith.

94. O how few are the Souls, that attain to this perfect way of Praying, because they penetrate not enough into this internal recollection, and Mystical Silence, and because they strip not themselves of imperfect reflection, and sensible pleasure! O that thy Soul, without thoughtful advertency, even of it self, might give it self in Prey to that holy and spiritual Tranquility, and say with St. Austin (In his Confess. lib. 9. cap. 10.), Sileat anima mea, & transeat se, non se cogitando! Let it be silent and do nothing, forget it self, and plung into that obscure Faith: How secure and safe would it be, though it might seem to it that thus unactive and doing nothing it were undone.

95. I'll sum up this doctrine with a Letter that the Illuminated Mother of Cantal wrote to a Sister, and great Servant of God: Divine Bounty (said she) granted me this way of Prayer, that with a single View of God, I felt my self wholly dedicated to him, absorpt and reposed in him; he still continued to me that Grace, though I opposed it by my Infidelity, giving way to fear, and thinking my self unprofitable in that state; for which cause, being willing to do something on my part, I quite spoil all; and to this present I find my self sometimes assaulted by the same Fear, though not in Prayer, but in other Exercises wherein I am always willing to employ my self a little, though I know very well, that in doing such acts, I come out of my Center, and see particularly that that simple View of God, is my only remedy and help still, in all troubles, temptations, and the events of this Life.

96. And certainly, would I have followed my internal Impulse, I should have made use of no other means in any thing whatsoever, without exception; because when I think to fortifie my Soul with Arts, Reasonings and Resignations, then do I expose my self to new temptations and straights: Besides that, I cannot do it without great violence; which leaves me exhausted and dry, so that it behoves me speedily to return to this simple Resignation, knowing that God, in this manner, lets me see, that it is his Will and Pleasure, that a total stop should be put to the operations of my Soul, because he would have all things done by his own divine Activity; and happily he expects no more of me, but this only View in all spiritual Exercises, and in all the pains, temptations and afflictions that may befall me in this life. And the truth is, the quieter I keep my Spirit by this means, the better all things succeed with me; and my crosses and afflictions suddenly vanish. Many times hath my bl

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