

Holy Wisdom

Instructions on

The Spiritual Life,
Mortification, &
Prayer

Fr. Augustine Baker, OSB

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HOLY WISDOM: Instructions on the Spiritual Life, Mortification, and Prayer

Originally authored by the Venerable Father Augustine Baker, O.S.B., in the year of Our Lord 1657.

This edition has been edited to correct typographical and orthographic inconsistencies found in earlier transcriptions. In all other respects, the text has been preserved to reflect the substance and spiritual intent of the original author.

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General Preface

IF it is a duty to apply to holy books the practice which the *Following of Christ* bids us observe towards holy persons, ‘not to dispute concerning the merits of the saints, as to who is more holy than another, or greater in the kingdom of heaven,’ it will not be right to give the preference to the work which we are now offering in a new form to the public, over the many, spiritual books which have helped on souls in the way of perfection. But it will not be right either to give to other books a preference over this. Certainly *Sancta Sophia* has been of great service in instructing beginners, in guiding proficientes, and in securing those that have arrived at some degree of perfection, in the way along which Almighty God has called and led souls that have been highly privileged; and the Holy Spirit, *who breatheth where He will*, has through the words of the Venerable Father Baker whispered to these souls, and has drawn them on to a closer and closer union with Himself. Ever since the time that I first became acquainted with the writings of Father Augustine Baker, either in the epitome of them in which Father Serenus Cressy has so successfully presented them in his compilation, to which he gave the appropriate name which this book bears, *Sancta Sophia*, Holy Wisdom, or in their extended and full form, as they exist in various portions in some of our convents, I felt the desire to enter upon the task, which by God’s blessing I have at last completed, of republishing with necessary annotations this golden treasury. Why should it be kept in the dark when, by being set up aloft, it could shed such light around?

Difficulties, which time has at last removed, have constantly been in my way. Duties of an imperative nature have ever attended me, and in the midst of them—though I have never lost sight of the task I had imposed upon myself—it

has not been in my power to do more than a little at a time; and therefore the time has been long in proportion to the importance of the labour. In addition to reprinting the work, I felt that I ought to do two things,—to verify the quotations from the Fathers and spiritual writers, which are interspersed throughout the various treatises; and secondly to call attention to certain passages where explanation or even correction was demanded. The first of these tasks I have been compelled in great measure to abandon; the second, which is of greater importance, I have not neglected. But I must say a word upon both.

The task of verifying quotations from the authors referred to in the writings of Father Baker has been, as is the case with regard to all similar works, an exceedingly difficult and a hopeless labour. I have spent hours upon hours and with very little success. I remember many years ago reading in a note in some edition of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius,¹ that the Scripture quotations of that holy Saint and great Master of the spiritual life are not always strictly correct; because it was evident the Saint quoted from memory, without referring on each occasion to the sacred text. Father Baker, in his reading of the Fathers and of spiritual writers, seems to have noted down at the time passages and words that struck him as bearing upon the subject on which he happened to be then engaged. And Father Cressy, in condensing the good Father's writings, cited the name, but without any reference to the special treatise; and thus in almost all instances no help is given towards a classical verification of the authority, upon which a truth or principle is confirmed by the writer. To verify passages, therefore, to which no reference whatever is given, is a very laborious task. But in cases in which it is important that the special reference should be pointed out, I have done my best with whatever assistance I have been able to command; and I trust that no question has been left unnoticed in which the authority has been really of importance. To verify every quotation would imply an expenditure of time which I have not, and never can expect to have, at my disposal. This difficulty I have especially felt in the case of the writings of Thaulerus, whose works, as far as I know them, are in very closely-printed volumes, with limited

1. Seager's translation of Father Rothaan's *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 142.

and imperfect indexes. However, I feel that this is not a matter of practical value, as the good persons into whose hands this edition of *Sancta Sophia* will fall, and who will make the most use of it, will probably have no opportunity or desire of referring to the original, even if every chapter and verse were carefully recorded.

With regard to the second matter of explaining or even correcting certain passages, I hope I have not been negligent. The necessity of such explanations or corrections arises mainly from the circumstances of the period in which Father Baker wrote, and in which his writings were collected, condensed, and printed. Father Baker wrote his treatises and gave his instructions to the religious under his guidance, a short time before the Church was called on to pronounce on the doctrines of Quietism. The same difficulty, therefore, exists in regard to certain expressions of his, as exists with regard to the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers. Before the time in which the Church in the Council of Nicaea found it necessary to enter more fully into the definition of the terms of Substance, Nature, and Person, as predicated of the Mysteries of the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation, expressions may have been sometimes used by perfectly orthodox theological writers, which were capable of a wrong interpretation. But when, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church defined with careful and logical precision what these sacred Mysteries implied in reference to the various terms used and required, with regard to unity of Substance and plurality of operations, a more exact terminology was strictly observed, in order that orthodoxy might be professed, and that through *the sound word that cannot be blamed, he who is on the contrary part might be afraid, having no evil to say* (Titus ii.8). If even St. Paul's own words, notwithstanding the inspiration under which he wrote, were *wrested to destruction*, no wonder that the words of faithful and wise theologians and martyrs were sometimes misinterpreted and wrenched into a defense of heresy. Father Baker, I have said, lived and wrote just before Quietism was condemned. For it was in the year 1687 that Pope Innocent XI. censured and pronounced sentence against the sixty-eight propositions of Molinos; and in 1699 Innocent XII. condemned the semi-Quietism of Madame Guyon and the illustrious Fénelon. Father Baker had already completed his labours, having gone to his reward in 1641, and Father Cressy in 1674.

Certainly some parts of *Sancta Sophia* would have been omitted or expressed otherwise, had these two holy Fathers lived to witness the controversy and its issue. Care has been taken to call attention to these points. I hesitated for a time whether I ought not altogether to omit such parts; but upon deliberation and after taking counsel, I thought it better not to interfere with the original, but to make the correction, or give a necessary explanation, in a note. An instance will be found in treat. iii. sect. iii. chap. vii. in reference to the prayer of silence of Don Antonio de Rojas, which has been condemned by the Church; though the censure was not affixed to it during Father Baker's lifetime. That Father Baker was no Quietist and had no sympathy with Quietism is especially evident from the prayer of Acts, which he so fully explains and so warmly recommends in the third section of the third treatise.² And the collection of Acts at the end of the work is of itself an evidence how averse he was to the teaching of those, who, after Molinos, considered Contemplation to be a state of perfect inaction, in which the soul exercised none of its powers, and elicited no acts whatever, not even of hope, love, or desire; in other words that it was doing nothing at all, and therefore not praying nor adoring.

Although it may be safely said that there is no fear nowadays from Quietism in any general effect, for the active spirit of the time is so opposed to it, and even the prevalence and increase of vocations to active rather than contemplative orders in the Church render such a danger very unlikely, yet there may be a risk in individual cases of souls being misguided, unless they are on their guard, and receive caution from their directors against this possible evil. I trust that the danger signals which will be erected, where it seems necessary, will remove every objection which has been at any time felt, about allowing the free use in religious communities of this most useful and solid work on Mystical Theology.

A brief biography of the two good Fathers who have been respectively the author and compiler of the work will be appropriate. Some years ago, when I first undertook the task of preparing an edition of *Sancta Sophia*, I published

2. See especially treat. iii. sect. iii. chap. i. § 19, where he cautions against cessation of prayer.

a *Life of Father Baker*,³ and appended to it an essay on the Spiritual Life, mainly grounded on the venerable Father's teaching. As that work is accessible, though I believe it is not very easy to procure, I shall limit myself at present to but a few details.

David, known in religion by the name of Augustine, Baker was born in Abergavenny on the 9th of December 1575, of Protestant parents. He received his early education at Christ's Hospital in London, and at the age of fifteen went to the University of Oxford, and entered as a commoner at Broadgates' Hall, now known as Pembroke College. He remained at Oxford but two years, and then returned home to enter upon the study of the law under the instruction of an elder brother. This study he afterwards prosecuted with great attention in London, until upon his brother's death he once more returned to his native town. Here he worked under his father, who managed the estates of the Earl of Abergavenny. His religious education had not been attended to, and for a long time he seems to have led a thoughtless, though, from his own testimony, not a wicked life. But having been rescued by an extraordinary intervention of Providence from a most perilous position, in which his life was likely to be sacrificed, he entered into himself, and began to think seriously upon the affairs of his soul. He sought instruction at the hands of a Catholic priest, the Rev. Richard Floyd, was received into the Church, and abandoning the law he resolved to devote himself to the sacred ministry. He became acquainted with a Benedictine Father of the Cassinese Congregation, sought and obtained admission into the novitiate, and was clothed in the Abbey of St. Justina at Padua. He went through his year's probation; but being very much broken down in health he left Padua before taking his vows, and returned to England, where, having recovered his strength, he made his profession at the hands of some Italian Benedictine Fathers of the same Cassinese Congregation. He was then in the thirty-second year of his age.

3. *Life and Spirit of Father Augustine Baker*, &c. London, 1861, Catholic Publishing Company.

For some years, before being promoted to the priesthood, he was employed by his superiors in various employments, in which his legal and historical knowledge was of great service. He devoted himself very earnestly also to prayer and the exercises of the spiritual life; and although he made such progress by his earnestness and perseverance—sometimes for six hours at a time in prayer—as to have been rewarded by ecstasies, yet in his case the course even of such love did not run over-smoothly, and from time to time he seemed to fall back again from his advancement. All this was the working of the Divine Spirit, both to ground him more perfectly in humility, and to give him an experience which he was to use afterwards in the guidance of others. After an interval of twelve years he went over to Rheims, where he was ordained priest in the year 1619, in his forty-fifth year; and in the following year he was appointed chaplain to the family of Mr. Philip Fursden, in Devonshire. Here, in a life of great retirement, he pursued with steady constancy the spiritual exercises, and by recommending to all inquirers into the Catholic faith the duty of prayer, in order to obtain light and strength, he succeeded in gaining many converts to the Church.

At this time the venerable Father's life was so thoroughly one of prayer, that he used sometimes to devote as many as eleven hours in the day to this holy practice. His health, however, was extremely delicate, and as he was threatened with consumption, he was ordered by his superiors to move to London, where it was hoped that occupation of a somewhat more active nature might be of advantage to him. He laboured, conjointly with Father Clement Reyner, in compiling the well known *Apostolatus Benedictinorum*, and began at that same period to write some of his spiritual treatises. He had to travel about to various parts of England and the Continent to consult documents, and at the same time that this change of occupation benefited his bodily health, it did not in the least interfere with his spiritual progress. He had now so perfectly grounded himself in the ascetical life, that no distractive employments could withdraw him from his habits of recollection. His life *was hidden with Christ in God*, and was what he himself so aptly calls such a life, 'a life of introversion.'

In Christmas of the year 1623, Father Rudesind Barlow, President-General of the English Benedictine Congregation, founded a community of Benedictine

nuns at Cambray, and in the following summer Father Baker was ordered to go and assist in training the young community in the ways of the spiritual life. Here he was in his true element; and the solid progress made by his disciples was a proof of his skill and success as a *xviii* guide in these high paths. The two most noted amongst these holy souls were Dames Catherine Gascoigne and Gertrude More. The former of these was the most faithful and constant follower of Father Baker's instructions, and became herself so skilled in the practice of the duties of the Religious Life, that she was employed for some time by the Archbishop of Cambray in forming a convent in his diocese after the model of her own. She held the office of Abbess of Cambray from the fifth year of her profession, almost uninterruptedly till her death in 1676, two years after her jubilee in Religion. Her letter to Father Cressy prefixed to *Sancta Sophia*, and his answer prefixed to the third treatise, show what interest she, took and what part she bore in the drawing up of the instructions contained in this work. The other holy nun, Dame Gertrude More, a direct descendant of the martyred Lord Chancellor, was of a character more difficult to bring into that subjection to a spiritual guide, which seemed so natural to Dame Catherine Gascoigne. At first she refused the direction of Father Baker, and pursued a spiritual course of her own. But being one day vividly struck by a passage which he read to her from an ascetical work upon the exceptional guidance of souls in a state of aridity, she placed herself completely under his direction, and quickly advanced so far as to arrive at a very close union with God. Many of the Acts and Affections at the end of *Sancta Sophia* were found among her writings, gathered, it would appear, from Father Baker's suggestions. Her little work, called *An Idiot's Devotions* by herself, but by Father Baker more properly called *Confessiones Amantis*, expresses the spirit by which she was animated. She died young, it is said in the odour of sanctity, in the twenty-seventh year of her age in the year 1633.

During the nine years that the venerable Father remained at Cambray, he drew up many of his ascetical treatises at the earnest request of the community, who were anxious to perpetuate instructions which had been of such immense value to themselves. Many of them are lost, but several are preserved, and may be found in manuscript in the libraries of Downside, Ampleforth, Stanbrook, and

St. Benedict's Priory at Colwich. They are best known, however, through the form in which Father Cressy drew them up in the work which is now presented once more to the public. Father Baker remained nine years at Cambray, and then was removed to the Monastery of St. Gregory at Douai, and became a conventual. There he continued his wonted exercises, and devoted himself also to his writings. After about five years' sojourn he was again sent on the mission into England, being then in the sixty-third year of his age, in the year of our Lord 1638. At that time a summons to the English Mission was a summons to go forth to martyrdom; and notwithstanding his love for conventual life, and his deep sense of the responsibility attending the career of a missionary, he at once set about preparing for his departure. He started—after a painful farewell—from his convent; and, on arriving in England, divided his labours between London and Bedfordshire. He was sought after by the pursuivants who were at that time particularly active in bringing Catholic priests to judgment and to execution; and was obliged, old and feeble as he was, to fly, according to our Divine Lord's advice, from place to place, in order to avoid the persecution. But nothing interfered with his devotedness to prayer.

The struggle between sickness and persecution, as to which was to conquer in his regard, went on for three years, and at last it was to end in 1641 in favour of sickness. The year 1641 was a fatal one for priests, but a rich one for martyrs. In that year Bishop Challoner enumerates eighteen priests who were condemned to death, and were either savagely executed or harassed to death in prison. Among them were two of Father Baker's *confrères*, Fathers Ambrose Barlow and Bartholomew Roe. He himself was on the point of being seized, when he was struck by a contagious fever, which scared away his pursuers. Though he did not actually die upon the scaffold, to which he was on the very point of being led, he may well be considered as a martyr. In concealment, and under the solicitous and affectionate care of a good Catholic matron—Mrs. Watson, mother of one of the nuns of Cambray—in constant prayer and acts of resignation, he resigned his soul unto the hands of his Creator on the 9th of August 1641, in the sixty-sixth year of his age and the thirty-seventh of his religious profession. *Defunctus adhuc loquitur*. Though dead, he continued to

live, and has continued living ever since, in his spiritual writings; and it is to be hoped that his voice will be made to sound again, and be heard by a more numerous circle of hearers, through the means of the work which is now again going forth into the world.

It was in the year 1657, sixteen years after this holy Father's death, that his friend and disciple, Father Serenus Cressy, published the useful compilation of his writings, under the name of *Sancta Sophia*. This Father, called in baptism Hugh Paulin, and in religion Serenus, was born at Wakefield, in Yorkshire, in the year 1605, the eventful year of Fawkes's Gunpowder Plot, and the same year in which Father Baker was clothed in the Abbey of St. Justina in Padua. He went to the University of Oxford at the early age of fourteen, and in the year 1626, at the age of twenty-one, became Fellow of Merton. He received orders in the Church of England, and was appointed chaplain to Lord Wentworth, afterwards Earl of Strafford of noted memory. A little later he was chaplain to Lord Falkland; then he became Canon of Windsor, and afterwards Dean of Leighlin, in Ireland. He travelled as tutor to a young English nobleman, and in the year 1646 became a convert, and was received into the Church in Rome, where he happened to be at the time. Next year, being in Paris, he published his *Exomologesis*, or Motives of his Conversion, which he dedicated to the Carthusian Fathers of Nieuport in Flanders, whom he at one time thought of joining. However, owing to their very secluded mode of life, he was directed to turn towards an Order in which his literary capacity might be of greater service, and he joined the Benedictine Community of St. Gregory's at Douai, where he took his vows in April 1649. He remained as a conventual for some eight years, having, however, spent about one year of that time in Paris, with an affiliation community from Cambray. This house in Paris, placed under the protection of our Lady of Good Hope, is now existing in its worthy successors at St. Benedict's Priory, Colwich, near Stafford. He was afterwards sent out on the mission into the South Province in England; and upon the marriage of Charles II. with the Infanta of Portugal in 1662, he became one of her chaplains, and resided for four years at Somerset House. Here, besides discharging zealously and edifyingly the duties of the sacred ministry, he devoted much time to writing several learned books on

controversial subjects.⁴ During this time he was also engaged upon his great work, the *Church History of Brittany*, which he published at Rouen in 1668.

Father Cressy was greatly esteemed by his religious brethren, and held among them several offices of trust and responsibility, and was for many years a member of the General Chapter. His last missionary appointment was to the chaplaincy of Richard Caryl, Esq., of East Grinstead, in Sussex, where he died the death of the just on the 10th of August 1674, in the sixty-ninth year of his age. It was towards the end of the time of his residence as a conventual at Douai, that he drew up these instructions from the writings of Father Baker, which in a dedicatory letter to Father Laurence Reyner, President-General of the English Benedictine Congregation, he declares to have drawn up and published in obedience to his command. Not obedience only, however, he adds, but gratitude urged him on in his work of love; for to these instructions he, in that same letter, attributes the hastening of his conversion to the faith, and his call to join the Benedictine Order. May God in His infinite mercy grant that these same words of wisdom and piety may bring grace and inspire resolution into many a hesitating soul, and tend to *enlighten those that are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death!* Any one who has had the opportunity of reading any of the Treatises of Father Baker in their original form, will be able to testify to the industry required for compiling them, as Father Cressy has done, and for the fidelity with which the more than forty different Treatises have here been preserved and interpreted.

It remains to make two or three observations in connexion with the teaching conveyed in the treasury of wisdom here laid open. Let me most earnestly recommend the reading of Father Cressy's *Preface to the Reader*, herein prefixed to the first Treatise. Possible objections are here anticipated and answered. Also I must invite very particular attention to the case of the holy Jesuit, Father Balthasar Alvarez, recorded in the 7th Chapter of Section 1, Treatise III., where we find a full and striking and most telling apology for the method of prayer, so strongly recommended by Father Baker. One great reason why so many break down in their attempts at arriving at perfection in the spiritual life is, because

4. See the list in Dodd. vol. iii. p. 308.

they are tied down too stiffly to the formal method of Discursive Prayer, and are not allowed free enough scope for the exercise of Acts and Affections. It is quite proper that upon the first entrance into the spiritual life, the soul should be well exercised in the use of the powers of the soul, and that the Understanding especially should be called into play. But to insist upon working the Understanding, even when the Will is ready at once to work, is not unlike insisting on the spelling of every word, or the parsing of every sentence, each time that we read a book or a newspaper. All our proficiency and skill would avail us nothing, if we were to be thus tied down; and the reading of books would indeed be anything but instructive and entertaining. Father Balthasar Alvarez, in the chapter just referred to, will be found to say: 'All internal discoursing with the understanding was to cease, whensoever God enabled souls to actuate purely by the will. And that to do otherwise would be as if one should be always preparing somewhat to eat, and yet afterwards refuse to taste that which is prepared. By this divine Prayer of the Will, the Holy Spirit of Wisdom with all the excellencies of it described in the Book of Wisdom (chap. viii.) is obtained, and with it perfect liberty.'

Undoubtedly, as we have said, on the first entrance into the spiritual life it is important to attend to the instructions given upon Discursive Prayer, or ordinary Meditation.⁵ But it is not to be understood that this method is to be rigidly adhered to throughout. When Almighty God calls the soul to the Prayer of Acts, and afterwards of Aspirations, the soul ought to be allowed liberty to obey and follow the call. It is quite true that we should not attempt to run, until we have become steady enough upon our feet to stand or walk. But it is equally true that if we content ourselves with only standing or walking, when there is occasion for greater speed and activity, we shall be outstripped by others, who have learnt that *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*: who have heard the summons to work in the words: *Why stand you here all the day idle?* and have obeyed the command of the energetic St. Paul: *So run that you may receive*. For a great truth which Father Baker always keeps before us is, that we are not simply

5. See Sancta Sophia, treat. iii. sect. ii. chap. ii.

to satisfy ourselves that we devote a certain period each day to our mental prayer, but that we must aim at progress in Prayer, and that by becoming more practised and more perfect in that holy exercise, we may make corresponding progress in holiness of life, and ascending from virtue to virtue, may at last by closer union be allowed to *see the God of gods in Sion*.

In the same manner as Father Rothaan, S.J., in his most practical and excellent instruction on ‘the Method of Meditation,’ gives an example how to meditate on an eternal truth, and works out the meditation, in order that it may serve as a model on which to work out others, so will I submit an example, how the Prayer of Acts may be exercised, according to the instructions given in *Sancta Sophia*. We will take the truth suggested by Father Rothaan: *What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul!* We must divide our Prayer into the ordinary divisions observed in meditation: 1. the Beginning; 2. the Body; 3. the Conclusion. In the BEGINNING we must, as usual, make our act of recollection of the Presence of God, pray for light, and by an act of sorrow remove sin, which obscures the soul, and then quiet the imagination, by picturing our Divine Lord standing before us, and addressing directly to us those words, which are His own.

Then passing on to the BODY of the Prayer, instead of arguing with myself, I address my words in the form of Acts to Almighty God, or to our Divine Lord; observing, usually, a method in the Acts, beginning with the lower ones grounded on Faith, and progressing towards the higher ones of Confidence and Love. Thus may I pray. *Faith*. O my God, I believe these words, and I accept in my soul the great truth they express. Thou hast made my soul eternal, and therefore I fully see its immense value. The world may try to convince and persuade me through its false principles to follow it, and forget Thee; but to whom shall I go but to Thee who hast the words of eternal life? &c. *Sorrow*. O my Divine Jesus, how sorry am I that I have not hitherto felt this truth and acted up to it! Every time I have sinned I have denied this truth by my own willful act and deed. Never let me sin again, &c. *Humility*. But who am I, that I should pretend to make such a promise? I am weak by nature, and have weakened myself still more by sin. I am Thy child: do Thou save me. Lord, save me, or

I perish, and I shall never gain the end for which alone Thou hast made me, &c. *Supplication*. Give me grace, O my most powerful and generous God, that I may ever live up to what I now feel; and if this day any temptation come upon me, do xxv Thou cry out in my ears, and make me hear Thy words: *What doth it profit*, &c. *Hope*. Now I feel that I have more courage, because Thou hast promised to assist me in my struggle. I rely on Thy power and Thy fidelity; and though I have a great work to do in striving to save my soul, Thou canst and wilt help me, and then we shall succeed, &c. *Confidence*. Nay, O my God, I have more than hope: *Certus sum*. I am sure that Thou canst conquer all my enemies, and that Thou, in saving my soul, wilt save what is already Thine. *Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac*, &c. *Love and Desire*. Since I belong to Thee, O God, I value Thee far beyond all the world, and all that the world can give me. I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Thee, Thou God of my heart and my portion for ever. Woe that my sojourning is prolonged! Draw me to Thee, and help me to run in the way of Thy commandments, &c. Thus, the soul speaks to God, and is continually actuated towards Him. The lower Acts of Faith, Sorrow, &c., will at first be more numerous, and will suggest themselves more readily than the higher ones of Confidence, Love, Resignation, and such like; but after a time these latter ones will prevail. At the end a devout, colloquy or address is made to God, and His blessing is humbly and fervently besought in behalf of all that the soul has been inspired to promise and resolve. A slow and patient perusal of the Exercises appended to this volume will facilitate the making of these Acts. And as the higher Acts become more easy and familiar, the soul will advance further in its union with God, and Prayer will become more affective. I may be allowed to refer the reader to what is said in the short Treatise upon the Spiritual Life, which I have appended to the *Life of Father Baker*, pp. 141, &c.

I feel that it is not necessary for me to say anything more by way of Preface. But, submitting everything to the judgment of the Holy See, I now commend the work which I have prepared, to the blessing of God; and beg that He, from whom comes down every good and perfect gift, will bestow, in behalf of those who make a good use of these holy instructions, a fresh harvest of the fruit which

was gathered in such abundance when *Sancta Sophia* first made its appearance, and guided so many souls to Perfection.

J. NORBERT SWEENEY, O.S.B.

St. John's Priory, Bath,
Ash Wednesday, A.D. 1876.

Preface to the Christian Reader

BELOVED CHRISTIAN READER,

Before thou proceedest to partake of what is promised thee in the frontispiece of this book, thou art entreated to permit thyself to be detained awhile in the entry. For perhaps a short delay here will make thy progress afterwards both more speedy and profitable.

2. This is to acquaint thee that the *immaculate doctrine* contained in this book, though it never met with any that opposed, or so much as questioned, the verities thereof, speculatively considered, yet there have not wanted some that have judged them not fit to be thus exposed to thy view, much doubting thou wouldst prove such an one as would make an ill use and perverse advantage from them.

3. Now the principal, yea only, point that gives some this jealousy is that which thou wilt find in the *Second Section* of the *First Treatise*, where is treated touching divine illuminations, inspirations, impulses, and other secret operations of God's Holy Spirit in the hearts of internal lives. Concerning which the constant teaching of our Venerable Author (in brief) is this, viz. 'That the Divine Spirit, by virtue of the said operations, is to be acknowledged our only secure Guide and Master in these secret paths of divine love, discovered in some measure in the following treatises. And consequently that the most essential, universal duty to be aspired unto by every one that pretends a desire or intention to walk in the same paths is, to give up his soul and all his faculties to God's internal guidance and direction only, relinquishing and renouncing all other instructors and instructions, as far as they are not subordinately cooperating with this our Divine Master, for the receiving of whose celestial influences, the

humble and devout scholar is obliged to prepare and dispose himself by prayer, abstraction of life, &c.; in solitude hearkening to His voice and call, and learning how to distinguish it clearly from the voice and solicitations of human reason or corrupt nature; till that by long familiarity and conversation with God, divine love alone will so clear his spiritual sight, that he will see at last no other light, nor receive motion from any other, but God only; and this in all actions, omissions, and sufferings, though in themselves of the smallest importance.’

4. This is our Venerable Author’s doctrine, everywhere in all his treatises (whatever the subject be) inculcated, and even to the wearying of the readers, continually repeated and asserted. Indeed a doctrine it is so fundamental to all his other instructions concerning prayer and mortification, &c., that the least weakening of its authority renders all the rest unprofitable.

5. But little reason there is to fear that a doctrine, which is the very soul of Christianity, can be shaken by human opposition, or disparaged by jealousy. True it is, notwithstanding, that though this fundamental verity receives testimony abundantly both from Scripture and universal tradition, though it be constantly asserted in the schools, and sprinkled everywhere in almost all mystical writers, yet scarce hath any one since the ancient fathers’ times (especially St. Augustine) so purposely, largely, and earnestly recommended it to practice. And, therefore, no great wonder it is, if such a way of delivering it hath seemed a novelty, even to those that speculatively and in theory acknowledge it to be the established doctrine of the Church; and whilst they willingly, and with applause, hear it asserted daily in the schools, yet meeting with it thus popularly spread, they are offended with it; I mean with the communicating it to the use and practice of the unlearned.

6. Now what it was that troubled them will appear from the only objection in the Author’s lifetime made against it, which was indeed a mere jealousy, lest this doctrine so delivered should prejudice the authority of superiors. The which objection he answered to the full satisfaction of all that were interested in the matter. The sum of which answer follows in the ninth chapter of the second section of the first treatise, and needs not to be here repeated.

7. But since his death, and especially after that, by a general unanimous agreement of all superiors among us, it had been ordained that the sum of the Author's spiritual doctrine should, for the good of souls aspiring to contemplation, be published; but the same objection hath been renewed, and others moreover added thereto. And all of them have risen from the like ground of jealousy, not so much acknowledged to be rational by the objectors themselves (who readily subscribe to the doctrine as Catholically true and holy) as feared from others; to wit, partly from ordinary not learned Catholics, who, it is suspected, will be suspicious of a doctrine that will seem new and, however, unproper to them; but principally from strangers and enemies to the Church, especially the frantic enthusiasts of this age, who, as is feared, will conceive their frenzies and disorders justified here.

8. These things considered, both zeal to truth, duty to superiors, and charity to thee, beloved reader, obliged me before all other things to beseech thee to abstain from reading the book, unless it can be demonstrated beforehand that it was fit to come into thy hands; that the suspected inconveniences and suspicions are evidently groundless; that it would be a greater frenzy in the enthusiasts of these days, or in any seduced or seducing spirits, to claim any right in this doctrine than that which already possesses them; and, in a word, that no objections, either against the doctrine or publishing of it, either have, or, as we suppose, can rationally be devised, to make us repent the printing, or thee the reading, of the following book.

9. Among the said objections this one is scarce worthy to find place, which yet by some hath been urged against the publishing to all Christians' view instructions about prayer and mystical practices proper to a few contemplative persons (for whom alone the Author intended them, without the least thought of having them communicated and exposed so generally): especially considering that this treatise discourses of sublime mystic matters, above the reach of vulgar capacities; and also, that whereas to such tender well-minded souls (as those were for whom the said treatises were meant) just liberty and condescendence were allowed in many cases, not to be permitted to others that either in the world, or

else in a religious life, do walk in other ways; these, notwithstanding, will be apt to their own prejudice to make use of such liberty.

10. But surely, as it would be most unreasonable to forbid a physician to publish a book of remedies against some special diseases, for fear that some that are untouched of those diseases, or perhaps sick of the contrary, should hurt themselves with making use of medicines improper for them; or Molina the Carthusian to publish his excellent instructions for priests, lest lay persons should assume the privileges belonging to that sublime calling; or Alvarez de Paz to print his volumes about the duties and exercises of religious persons, because they are improper for seculars; so neither upon such grounds ought these instructions be hindered from being public. Neither ought any to fear lest ordinary Christians will foolishly apply to themselves the relaxations about confessions, &c., necessarily allowed to well-minded scrupulous souls that pursue contemplative ways in an abstracted life and solitude. Or that souls that live distracted, solicitous, active lives, as long as they live so, will judge themselves interested in the ways and exercises of internal contemplative livers. Or, in a word, that those who are yet but beginners, or have made but small proficiency in internal ways of the spirit, will be so foolishly presumptuous as to aspire to exercises more sublime than belong to them; the which they cannot do without receiving infinite prejudice by their indiscreet ambition. Add hereto, that on several occasions there have been used and inculcated in this book the best preventions, cautions, and provisions that possibly could be devised, against all misunderstanding and misapplication of any doctrines contained in it. To conclude, it may seem a sufficient safeguard for me to have herein the

example of the V. R. F. A. C.,¹ a person much esteemed for learning and piety, who hath not only published (in an additional treatise to *The Conflict of the Soul*) *Instructions for Contemplation*, but a great part of his Maxims (though brief) are very conformable to what is here expressed more largely.

11. The special feared inconveniences that may arise from the publishing of this doctrine touching divine inspiration, do regard partly some that live in the communion of the Church; but principally such as are strangers and enemies thereto. As for the former, it is suspected, that by urging so seriously the duty of attending to and following divine inspirations, some even of the more sober Catholics will be apt to be jealous, that the teachers and practisers of such a doctrine will seem thereby to exempt themselves in many things from the ordinary jurisdiction of prelates and magistrates, pretending to extraordinary illuminations and commissions, and to walking *in mirabilibus super se*, &c., by which a prejudice and contempt also may be cast upon the common orders and rules concerning faith and good manners established in the Church.

12. Now not to forestall what is copiously delivered in the second treatise (to wit, that due obedience to all kind of superiors is so far from being prejudiced by this doctrine, that it is only by this doctrine that it is perfectly established, and all possible suspicions, all imaginary cases to the contrary solved): hereto it is answered that, whereas it is said that by a pretending to divine illuminations, &c., a contempt may be cast upon the common doctrines and rules of faith and

1. Father Cressy here refers to Father Castaniza, a Spanish Benedictine, author of the *Spiritual Conflict*, which was the basis of that well known and most valuable work, the *Spiritual Combat*, drawn up by Father Scupoli, a Theatine. In addition to the *Spiritual Conflict*, Father Castaniza wrote five treatises entitled the *Spiritual Conquest*. This is a work of instructions for contemplatives. The fifth treatise contains 'the choicest Maxims of Mystical Divinity,' here also referred to. He died about the year 1599. Ziegelbauer says, 'claruit ad annum 1599.' This work has been recently edited by Canon Vaughan, O.S.B.—J.N.S.

a good life, there is not the least ground for such an apprehension. For never did any spiritual mystic writer pretend to receive any new or formerly unknown lights or revelations in matters of faith, beyond what have been known and universally received in the Church. The lights which such persons by God's gracious visits receive being only a clearer sight of ordinary mysteries; the which produces in them a firmer assent unto them, a greater love of them, an abhorring of all novelties of doctrines, and a most fervent zeal to the unity and peace of the Church, and to the reducing of all unbelievers, misbelievers, and schismatics, into its bosom and communion.

13. The like is to be said for the rules of practice, and a holy Christian conversation. They know no other but such as are common to all other Christians, which are revealed in the Gospel, and proposed by the pastors of God's Church in councils, and in the writings of the holy fathers. The only advantage that in this regard is pretended to, and acquired, by attending to divine inspirations, is a more perfect use and a more faithful application of the ordinary precepts of holiness, or of counsels of perfection, to those who profess the embracing of such counsels: an extending of them further, and to more particulars, than it is possible to be taught by books or attained by study.

14. All Christians know that to blaspheme, to lie, to defraud, to be rebellious, unchaste, revengeful, &c., are sins odious to God; and that the contrary virtues are to be practised. Yea, moreover, they know that we are obliged to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength; that we ought in all things to intend His love and honour, &c. Moreover, all know that besides the essentially necessary Christian duties, there are other counsels of perfection, which belong to those upon whom God hath bestowed an extraordinary vocation and grace, enabling them to cast from them all secular anxieties and other impediments to perfect charity, and to put themselves in a condition of solitude, obedience, &c.; the which affords them the best expedients and helps for the increasing of divine love and conformity to His will, even in the smallest matters. All this in gross is known to all Christians of any reasonable capacity and good education.

15. But yet the wisest, the most subtle and learned Christians will never be able, by any human endeavours of study or meditation, to put in practice even those essential precepts after a perfect manner; that is, with an intention not only right, but also pure and deiform. And much less will they by such weak helps, be enabled to discern in a thousand particular cases and circumstances what is most perfect, most acceptable to God, and conformable to His divine will. As for example: 1. How when two good or indifferent things are proposed, to make choice or preference of that which, in the present disposition of the soul, will prove most advantageous to perfection. 2. How to spiritualise even the ordinary indifferent occurrences of our life, daily and hourly. 3. How to perceive what manner and degree of prayer is most proper and profitable to the soul in her present state. 4. Or what mortifications are in the present circumstances most advantageous. 5. Or how to discern the state, inclinations, and spiritual necessities of other souls committed to our charge. 6. Or lastly, to discover a thousand secret subtleties, close interests, and reservations of our corrupt nature, which mingle themselves, more or less, almost in all our best actions, &c. In these and a thousand like cases, not all the reading or study in the world will enable souls to carry themselves perfectly in the execution of those precepts or counsels, which in gross all know to be necessary, at least to the attaining to perfection. But a distinct actual supernatural light and grace is necessary; and this not to teach us new precepts or furnish us with new counsels, but circumstantially to apply those which are common and universally known. For want of which light it is that the true way to perfection is almost unknown, even to those who profess the seeking of perfection, and fill the world with books and instructions about it.

16. By what other means, then, is such light to be had? Surely by no other but by the exercise of divine love, which is most perfectly performed in internal prayer, in attention to and union with God in spirit. What an expert, persuading, and subtle master love is, beyond study or consideration, we see even in natural and secular businesses. One that is immersed in sensual love to any person, has no need of instructions or books to teach him the art of loving. We see how skilful on a sudden such an one becomes in the ways how to please the

person beloved. He loses not, neither out of ignorance nor negligence, the least opportunity to ingratiate himself. He understands the mind and intention of the other by the least signs; the motion of a hand, the cast of an eye is sufficient to inform him, and set him on work to attempt anything, or procure anything that may content the party. The like subtlety and perspicacity we may see in those earthy souls which cleave with an earnest affection unto riches. What subtle ways do they find out to increase their wealth! Such trifling inconsiderable things they make use of for that purpose, as another would not take notice of, or could not see how to make profit by them. They have almost a prophetic spirit to foresee dangers where none are, and advantages probable or possible to happen many years after.

17. Now how comes it to pass that the eyes of love are so quick-sighted? Surely by this: that where love to any particular object is predominant, it subdues all other affections to all other objects, which would distract the thoughts, and seduce the will from contemplating and adhering to the thing so beloved.

18. Upon such grounds, therefore, as these it is, that St. Augustine calls Divine Love (*Luminosissimam Charitatem*) *most full of light, and most enlightening*. For a soul that truly loves God with a love worthy of Him, having the mind cleared from all strange images, and the will purified from all strange affections, is thereby enabled purely to contemplate God without any distraction at all. And being desirous in all things to please Him, knows how to make advantage of all occurrences. Light and darkness, consolations and desolations, pains and pleasures, all these contribute to the advancing of this love. Yea, there is nothing so indifferent, or, in its own nature, so inconsiderable, but that such a soul can perceive how use may be made of it to please God thereby.

19. Now since pure love is exercised immediately to God only in pure prayer, by which alone the spirit is united to Him, hence it is that prayer is the only efficacious instrument to obtain supernatural light, according to the saying of David: *Accedite ad Deum, et illuminamini: Approach unto God* (by

prayer), *and (ye shall) be enlightened.*² And hence also it is, that the same holy prophet so earnestly and frequently (above twenty times in one Psalm, 118) prays for such light to understand and discover the wonderful things of God's Law. And what were those wonderful things? Surely not to be informed that murder and adultery were sins; or generally that God was to be loved with the whole soul; for much more knowledge he had than this before he prayed. But being desirous to give himself wholly to God, and to perform His will alone in all things, he so often makes use of prayer for the obtaining an extraordinary light (to be had no other way but by prayer) that he might thereby be enabled to discover and find out the Divine Will in all manner of cases and doubtful circumstances.

20. Now only such inspirations and such illuminations as these do spiritual persons pretend to by the means of prayer and attending to God. And if they do exercise prayer with a due fervour and constancy, these they shall most certainly enjoy, and that in such a measure that whereas the greatest part of ordinary good Christians are so dim-sighted as to see the Divine Will only in circumstances where there is a necessary obligation (so that they spend the far greatest part of their lives in actions that do no way advance them in Divine Love, being wrought chiefly in virtue of the principle of self-love and interests of nature), those that are perfectly internal livers, being clouded by no vain images, and distracted by no inferior affections, do see the Divine Will clearly in the minutest affairs, which they accordingly make advantage of to improve themselves in the love of God. And, according to the degrees of love, so proportionably are the degrees of light. And thus, I suppose, the pretended inconveniences suspected to flow from the publishing of this doctrine will appear to be only pretended and causelessly feared.

21. But the other objection at first sight seems more considerable, as implying a far greater and more certain inconvenience and danger that may ensue upon the publishing of this doctrine concerning divine inspirations, illuminations,

2. Ps. xxxiii. 6.

and calls. For thus they argue. It is to be feared that the fanatic sectaries which now swarm in England more than ever, will be ready to take advantage from hence to justify all their frenzies and disorders; all which they impute with all confidence to divine inspirations, illuminations, and 15impulses. For can we forbid them to practise what we ourselves teach to be a Christian duty? And yet it is apparent what fearful and execrable effects the practice of this pretended duty doth produce among them. It was by inspiration, say they, that their progenitors did break out of the Church; and by inspiration they do still introduce endlessly new fancies and practices. It is by inspiration that they endanger the ruin of Christianity itself by infinite schisms and pestilent reformations. It is by inspiration that they employ the Gospel to destroy the Gospel; from thence preaching heresies in churches and chambers, sedition in states, rebellion against princes and prelates; so destroying all order, unity, and peace everywhere. These things considered, what can be more reasonable than that we should take heed how we furnish them thus with arms to maintain themselves, and to fight against God and His Church?

22. This is the objection which, though it have a fearful show, yet, being well examined, it will prove no less weakly grounded than the former. For the demonstrating, therefore, of the inconsequence of it, I will, by way of preparation, lay down these following undeniable principles, briefly mentioned before, viz.

23. First, that divine inspirations are so absolutely necessary in precepts for the avoiding of sin, and in counsels for the gaining of perfection, that without them no action of ours can be good or meritorious. Yea, the duties of obligation which we perform, or counsels of perfection freely obeyed by us, are only so far acceptable to God as they proceed from His inspirations and motions of His Holy Spirit. This is not only an undoubted verity, but one of the most fundamental verities of the Christian religion, which attributes all good in us to the Divine Grace. And what is grace but the divine inspiration of love spread abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, as St. Augustine saith? To this verity give evident witness those expressions of the Church in her public devotions ‘Da, Domine, famulis tuis, ut quæ a te jussa agnovimus, implere

cœlesti inspiratione valeamus;’ that is, ‘Grant, O Lord, unto Thy servants, that those things which we acknowledge to have been commanded by Thee, we may, by Thy heavenly inspiration, accomplish.’ And again: ‘Auge populi tui vota placatus; quia in nullo fidelium nisi ex tua inspiratione proveniunt quarumlibet incrementa virtutum;’ that is, ‘Increase in mercy, O Lord, the desires of Thy servants; for not the least progress in any virtues can be made by any of Thy faithful servants by any other means, but only by Thy (divine) inspirations.’

24. The second ground is consequent on the former, viz. that since such absolute necessity there is of divine inspirations, the necessity obliging us to correspond unto them is, and must needs be, equal. For, from no other root, but the neglect of this obligation, doth or can proceed all our mischief. The guilt of such neglect is so much the greater inasmuch as the gift of God’s Holy Spirit imprinted in the hearts of His servants is of such an active nature that, were it not that the spirit of corrupt nature, cherished by us, doth deafen its call and weaken its efficacy, it would continually, being wakened by every occasion, incite us to love God only, and to raise up our souls to Him. Now by such neglect, we are said in Holy Scriptures to contristate the Holy Ghost; and by oft contristating Him we shall, in the end, come to quench Him. And the first indignation of God against such negligent despisers of His holy inspirations and calls is powerfully expressed in those words of his: *Quia vocavi et renuistis, &c.: Because I have called, and ye refused, I stretched forth My hand, and there was none that regarded, I also will laugh at your destruction, and I will mock when that which ye did fear shall happen unto you, &c. Then shall they call on Me, and I will not hear: they shall rise early, and they shall not find Me* (Prov. i. 24-28). Now though it be not indeed a mortal sin to resist the motion of the Divine Spirit inciting us to actions which are not of essential obligation, yet so doing we do contristate God’s Spirit, and more indispose ourselves afterwards to observe and follow its directions. And mortal sins are seldom rushed into upon the sudden: they begin with lesser resistances, by which the mind is more obscured and less capable to obey it in greater matters. But as for perfect souls, they are in continual attendance and obedience thereto, being in continual prayer, or

in good works and exercises begun and performed in virtue of prayer, and also accompanied by prayer.

25. The third preparatory ground follows, which is this: that since these so necessary internal inspirations must necessarily be hearkened to and corresponded with, and since there may be false suggestions, either of the devil or of our corrupt nature, which may counterfeit or subtly pretend to a divine original, therefore it is necessary that some possible, yea satisfactory, means should be afforded how to distinguish between true and false inspirations. For otherwise we shall have an impossible obligation to obey we know not whom, nor what. We shall be in as much danger to be actuated by the devil, and used as instruments of his illusions, as of the saving influxes of God's Holy Spirit; and consequently shall not be able to distinguish the way between heaven and hell.

26. Neither will it suffice to say, that we do sufficiently perform God's will when we perform the commands of God expressed clearly in Scripture, likewise the precepts of the Church, and of all our lawful superiors. For neither will the doing of these things without an interior influx of grace avail us, since the devil can be content, yea will suggest the exercise of the greatest virtues to hearts which he knows will intend only the satisfaction of natural pride, or the interests of self-love, in them. And, besides, neither can any of these external rules extend to all our actions, so as to regulate them in order to contemplation and perfection.

27. The fourth and last ground to be premised is this: that since it is necessary to be enabled to distinguish the true inspirations of God from the false suggestions of our enemy, the only means imaginable that can be proper, natural, and efficacious to obtain such a supernatural light to discern God's will in all things is pure spiritual prayer exercised by a soul living an abstracted, internal, recollected life, spent in a continual attendance on God, &c.

28. This is a way suitable to reason, conformable to Scriptures and the doctrine of the holy fathers, and delivered both by ancient and modern mystic authors, as might copiously be demonstrated if there were any cause to think, that to pray perfectly, and by prayer to obtain divine grace, were suspicious exercises to any. In a word, this is a way, the which practised according to the

instructions here delivered, all manner of good and no possible inconvenience can flow from it.

29. Here is no pretending to new or strange revelations: no walking *in mirabilibus super se*: no zealous seditious reformations, nor the least prejudice done or intended to peace, unity, humility, obedience, or any other divine virtue. Yea, on the contrary, all these heavenly graces are hereby not only fortified and increased, but by no other means can be perfectly obtained.

30. And indeed, since in a world of passages in Holy Scriptures we find ourselves obliged to a double duty, the one whereof perhaps in popular judgments seems to entrench upon the other, and yet neither of them is in due place and circumstances to be omitted, namely, obedience both to God's Holy Spirit inwardly directing, and also to superior outwardly commanding; by what other way can we reconcile such seemingly different and, as it may fall out, contrary precepts, but by joining this doctrine to that concerning outward obedience? Which is here done, and done without the least prejudice to either; yea manifestly to the advantage of both in their due circumstances. If, then, for any outward carnal respects, we shall conceal or discountenance this most necessary duty of following the inspirations of God, we shall efface the proper character of God's servants, who are said to be such as are *led by the Spirit of God*,³ and that *by the unction are taught in all things*.⁴ Again, if, on pretence of following inspirations and internal lights which cannot be so absolutely certain, we shall transgress the most evident certain commands of lawful superiors, which are, therefore, God's also, there would quickly follow an end of all order, peace, and government. What other means, therefore, is left to comply with both these, but to obey God both ways; that is, commanding most certainly when His will is revealed by superiors; and also very securely when, in other internal things, or which tend to perfection, without the least wrong, yea to the great advantage of superiors, He doth communicate His light and directions to us? So as that

3. Rom. viii. 14.

4. 1 John ii. 27.

saying of the Apostles with which they silenced the whole Jewish Sanhedrim, namely, that *God is rather to be obeyed than man*,⁵ commanding contrary to God, holds only when it can evidently be demonstrated (as the Apostles then did by miracles) that such a command did indeed come from God, or that the thing commanded by man is certainly unlawful.

31. These things considered, in all reason we ought to be so far from being deterred from publishing such instructions as these, because forsooth the frantic spirits of this age do falsely make pretended inspirations the cause and ground of all the miseries and mischiefs of late happening in our nation, &c., that for this very reason and motive every one ought to publish such wholesome doctrines, the which are the only possible means to undeceive them. For what other way does there remain to convince them of their errors and seductions, dangerous to all mankind, but most certainly pernicious to their own souls? Shall we tell them that there are no inspirations at all? We shall, in so doing, betray the Christian religion. Shall we say, though there be inspirations, yet they are never to be marked, never obeyed nor complied withal? Besides the ridiculous falseness of the assertion, which will expose us to their most just contempt and hatred, they will overwhelm us with unanswerable texts of Scripture and passages from the holy fathers. What other thing then can be done, but that (acknowledging both that there are inspirations, and that we are obliged to correspond unto them) we should inform those unhappy souls how to dispose themselves so as to be out of danger of diabolical illusions, and to be in a capacity of receiving inspirations truly divine? As likewise with what caution and prudence, but withal with what fidelity, they ought to comply with them. But especially we ought to demonstrate and inculcate this fundamental verity, that the general and most certain precepts of humility, obedience, unity, and peace must never receive any prejudice by any pretended inspirations or illuminations; since those which are truly from God do establish and increase all these virtues; yea, that the external order, authority, and subordination established by God in

5. Acts iv. 19

His Church (by which alone it becomes one body, and not a monstrous heap of unlike, unproportionable members, fighting with and devouring one another) must be the rule by which to examine, and the judge to pronounce sentence for or against all manner of inspirations.

32. Therefore, instead of a human fruitless policy of hiding such divine fundamental practical truths as these, let us sincerely, faithfully, and plentifully teach them. And though it can never be prevented but that the devil will suggest to proud, ambitious, covetous, or sensual spirits to draw poison from the most perfect doctrines of Catholic Faith, yet then at least he and they will be the less able to seduce well-meaning souls to join with them; yea, by God's grace and benediction upon His truth faithfully taught, they will lose many such already seduced, when all their pretended lights being confronted before the Sun of divine verity and holiness, will either vanish quite away, or manifestly discover themselves to be the sulphurous gloomy lights of such wandering falling stars as are mentioned by St. Jude, to whom the tempest of darkness is reserved for ever.⁶

33. Oh, therefore, that it were God's blessed will that they would be persuaded to examine themselves and their instincts by such characters, such signs so manifestly Christian, holy, perfect, and secure as are here contained in this treatise, and accordingly judge of their and our inspirations! 1. In the first place, here the only proper disposition towards the receiving of supernatural irradiations from God's Holy Spirit is an abstraction of life, a sequestration from all businesses that concern others, and an attendance to God alone in the depth of the spirit; whereas their lights never come more frequently than when either being alone they yield to discontented, unquiet passions and murmurings about the behaviour and actions of others; or, when in close meetings and conspiracies, they vent such passions by invectives against the governors of the Church or State. 2. The lights here desired and prayed for are such as do expel all images of creatures, and do calm all manner of passions, to the end that the soul, being in a vacuity, may be more capable of receiving and entertaining God

6. Jude 13.

in the pure fund of the spirit. Whereas their lights fill them with all tumultuous disquieting images and phantasms concerning the supposed miscarriages of all others but themselves: and not only heighten their passions, but urge them to most terrible desolating effects. 3. The prayer here acknowledged to be the most effectual instrument to procure divine light is a pure, recollected, intime prayer of the spirit. Whereas the prayer they glory in is only an acquired ability and sleight to talk earnestly to God before others, and oft thereby to communicate their passions and discontents to their brethren. 4. Here are no new speculative verities or revelations of mysteries pretended: no private newly-found-out interpretations of Scripture bragged of. Whereas amongst them every day produces a new fancy, which must gather new company. 5. Here the established order of God's Church, and the unity essential thereto, is not prejudiced. Yea, the inspirations expected and obtained by pure internal prayer do more firmly and unalterably fix souls under this obedience, and to this order and unity; insomuch as whatsoever pretended lights do endanger the dissolving of unity, or do cross lawful authority, or shall be rejected by it, they are presently suspected and extinguished. Whereas those men's lights teach them nothing so much as to condemn and oppose all external authority, and to dissipate unity, dispersing the body of Christianity into innumerable sects and conventicles. 6. Our lights teach us to attend only to God and our own souls, and never to interest ourselves in any care or employment about others, till evidently God's inspirations force us, and external authority obliges us thereto. Whereas their lights render them incapable of solitude, and thrust them abroad to be reformers of others, being themselves impatient of all reformation and contradiction. 7. Our lights make us to fear and avoid all supereminence and judicature, all sensual pleasures, desires of wealth, honours, &c. Whereas their lights engage them violently and deeply in all these carnal and secular ways, and (for the attaining to these) in tumults, sedition, bloodshed, and war; in a word, in all manner of actions and designs most contrary to the spirit of Christianity. 8. And, lastly, our lights, if they should chance sometimes to be mistaken by us, no harm at all would accrue to others, and not any considerable prejudice to ourselves; because, as hath been said, the matters in which they direct us are in their nature indifferent, and are

ordered only towards a more perfect loving of God, and withdrawing us from creatures. Whereas all the miseries, and almost all the disorders and enormous vices, of the nations are the effects of their misleading lights.

34. Thus stands the case between Catholic inspirations and the pretended inspirations of sectaries. Such is that spirit of charity and peace, and so divine are the effects of it directing the minds of good, humble, obedient, and devout Catholics; and such is the spirit of disorder, revenge, wrath, rebellion, &c., and so dismal are the effects of that spirit wherewith self-opinionated, presumptuous, frantic sectaries are agitated! What resemblance, what agreement can there be between these two? This evil spirit, though it sacrilegiously usurps the name, yet it does not so much as counterfeit the operations of the Good One. Or if with the name it do sometimes seem to counterfeit some outward resemblances, and to some persons show demure looks, &c., yet the equivocation and hypocrisy is so gross and palpable that they must put out their eyes that perceive it not.

35. Shall we, then, extinguish, and in some sort exorcise, the good Divine Spirit, for fear it should raise up the evil one with it? Or rather shall we not confidently assure ourselves that, upon the appearing of the Good One, the evil one will either vanish, or the hideousness of it will affright all from hearkening to it? Shall we forbid the sun to rise, because in some unclean, rotten marshes some fogs will arise with it? We may as well annul the Sacraments, forbid prayer, extinguish the Scriptures, &c.; for from all these the devil has maliciously taken advantage to pervert and damn thousands of souls.

36. No doubt it is but that among those seduced and seducing people great numbers there are who, if they were charitably instructed in such ways of discerning spirits, they would be surprised and would start to see to what kinds of directors and guides they have unwarily committed their souls. If such as these could be persuaded (and I beseech God they may), even whilst they are yet out of the Church, for a while to suspend the pursuance of their busy designs and reforming of others, and retiring themselves into solitude, would allow themselves the leisure to turn their eyes inward into their own spirits, and practise as well as they can the humble, self-renouncing, resigned way of spiritual

prayer taught in this book, thereby to procure from God such lights as then may be trusted to, neither they nor we should ever repent that the publishing such doctrines as these gave them a happy occasion to do so.

37. And what greater satisfaction can Catholics have in their ways! And what greater advantage can they have over all those that are out of the Church than this proof made good by universal experience, viz. that whosoever sincerely and constantly gives himself to the practice of such perfect prayer as is here taught, if he be already a Catholic, he will most certainly ever remain so; and if he be not yet in the Church, he will be afraid of remaining his own pastor and guide? For never did any Catholic that exercised spiritual prayer cease to be a Catholic till he first ceased so to pray. And the spirit of such prayer, in any perfection, never rested upon any soul that was out of the Catholic Church.

38. And this, I suppose, may suffice not only to justify the truth and innocency of this our doctrine concerning divine inspirations, &c., but also the lawfulness, yea conveniency, yea even the necessity of publishing it to the world; and this for those very reasons wherewith others would deter us. For the objectors are afraid of the publication of it, lest frantic sectaries should think themselves justified in their pretences; and, on the contrary, I conceive the publication necessary, lest they should think themselves justified in their pretences, which, till they see how unlike to true divine lights and inspirations theirs are, they may have some show for. I do not intend, when I call it our doctrine, to appropriate it to any person or community; for it is the very same that hath in all ages been taught by all saints experienced in internal ways, as will be demonstrated by infinite testimonies ancient and modern, if God shall engage us to such a labour by the opposition of any one. True it is, that the pious and sublime Author of the treatises here abridged hath (doubtless by the guidance and assistance of a supernatural light) spent more thoughts about this subject, and taken more pains in encouraging well-minded souls to fit themselves for the receiving of such light, in distinguishing it from false lights, and in showing the blessed effects of it, &c., than perhaps any other author formerly did. And that is all. For the doctrine in substance is as old as Christianity itself, and cannot seem

strange or new but only to such to whom in these days antiquity seemeth the greatest novelty.

39. Having thus, by declaring the insufficiency of these objections against the publishing of the following instructions, opened the barriers to give this book a free scope to range abroad at liberty; and my only intention being (for God's glory) to benefit thy soul, dear reader; for as for the mean or sinister ends of gaining credit or esteem with others thereby, the ambition is so unworthy of my profession, and withal so poor and unreasonable, considering that I can appropriate nothing to myself but a little pains in transcribing and digesting another man's labours, that I cannot think myself liable to any suspicion with thee in that regard; therefore, to the end I may, according to the utmost of my ability, facilitate the receiving good to thy spirit hereby, though I have no more objections to answer, yet by conversing with certain pious and learned persons to whose perusal and judgment this book was presented. having found that some few passages in it were not so very clearly expressed, but that even an uninterested and dispassionate reader might, perhaps, stop a little at them, I thought it expedient to let thee, good reader, be acquainted what satisfaction I gave to them.

40. One point that seemed to require explanation is that (1st treat. 2d sec. 2d chap.) where is treated of what care a spiritual disciple ought to take in the choice of a fit director. For to leave a matter of such importance to the election of an inexperienced, and perhaps young and ignorant, soul, seemed to them neither convenient nor prudent. Besides that in religious communities such a permission would be an infringing of all due order and submission to superiors. But hereto was replied: 1. That religious persons were expressly excepted in the book; 2. and as for others, this very same advice was long since given by the Bishop of Geneva, Avila, &c. True it is, notwithstanding, that there may oft be found in the world many good devout souls that yet are not very capable of making a good choice. However, even such, as far as is allowed, ought to use their best endeavours, hoping that God will bless such their care for the advancement of their spirits. Notwithstanding such ought withal to take heed that from too nice a curiosity in choosing, there do not follow any disquiet in the families where

they live, if several persons should be zealous each for a particular director; as St. Jerome chides a mother and a daughter that upon such an occasion separated from one another. Therefore in such a case a good soul that will prefer peace before contenting her mind may, of all others, rely upon God, assuring herself that He will in a special manner assist and conduct her, supplying all other wants. And particularly such an extraordinary divine assistance may be most confidently expected by well-disposed souls in religious communities, where such freedom of choosing is not permitted. For, as Rusbrochius saith, God will rather send an Angel from heaven than that such humble, obedient, and sincere souls relying upon Him shall want due helps. Therefore, such as forbear a solicitous searching after a director, either for the preventing inconveniences, or out of an humble, sincere apprehension of the danger of erring in the choice, or a religious regard to the prejudice it might cause in a community to peace and good order, &c., such may well hope that God will not permit them to be losers thereby. Yea, moreover, such as in the fore-named cases think they have a true occasion, and that they may justly do it for the quieting of their consciences, resolving of their doubts, &c., had need be very wary that they proceed sincerely, and that they really seek their spiritual profit, and not natural contentment. For, as our Venerable Father Baker in a certain place adviseth, it is not sufficient to any souls, that it is permitted by the laws of the Church at certain times to require a 24special director (upon a consideration of the expedience and necessity that some souls in some circumstances may have), but they are to consider whether their case have these circumstances, and whether they do truly make use of the said permission for the right end.

41. A second point in the same chapter supposed to require explanation was that assertion, that a devout soul once set in a good and proper way of prayer, after she has made some progress in it, ought not to have recourse ordinarily to a director, but that she should practise the following of God's directions, &c. On the contrary, it was supposed that until a soul have made some considerable progress in the prayer of the will, she would not be subject to illusions, and, therefore, had thenceforward most need of advice from a prudent guide. But this difficulty is cleared towards the latter end of the third treatise, where it is

taught that in the case and peril of illusion upon an opinion of some extraordinary illuminations, &c., it is necessary that souls, though never so much advanced, should distrust their own judgment, and never presume to add belief unto, and much less put in execution anything suggested by, any illuminations (true or pretended) without the advice and consent of superiors and directors. But, as for the ordinary practices of an internal life, as prayer and mortification, &c., it is very requisite that souls should be taught, as soon as may be, to quit an assiduous dependence on external guides, from whence would follow nothing but solitudes, distractions, &c. There is a parallel advice, though in somewhat a different case in the 3d treat. 4th sec., 3d chap. §§ 36, 37, where, in a discourse concerning rapt and the like extraordinary favours, it is said of perfect souls that they may judge of those matters by their own supernatural light, &c., and that they are not so absolutely obliged to resign their judgments and wills to others as utterly to neglect their own proper call received from God, &c. By which words it is not meant that any souls, though never so perfect, should be exempted from the obligation of submission to superiors, judging or ordaining, concerning such divine favours; but only that such perfect souls need not so often have recourse for advice about such matters, but may proceed by that divine light communicated to them; whereas the imperfect ought neither to yield belief nor execution further than they have advice and order for. Now who would find fault with St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Sienna, &c., if they should forbear consultations after every rapt of revelation, having formerly been sufficiently warranted by superiors, &c.?

42. In consequence to the story of V. R. F. Balthasar Alvarez's account given of his prayer to his general (mentioned in the 3d treatise, 1st sect. 7th chap. at the end), where a relation is made of the general's orders, requiring all superiors to direct and assist the younger religious among them, so as that they might highly esteem and in their practice follow the manner of prayer most suitable to their institute, and prescribed in their exercises, I think myself obliged to acquaint thee, dear reader, that by two books published of late by two Rev. Fathers of the Society, and perused by me since the writing and printing of that passage, I find

that the said orders of the general are not, at least of late, so rigidly interpreted as formerly they were.

43. The authors of the said books written in French are R. F. Ant. Civorá and R. F. Andr. Baiole, in which the whole doctrine of this book, especially concerning the excellency of affective prayer beyond discursive, is most copiously and strongly asserted. Yea and moreover the instructions concerning the necessity of attending to and following divine inspirations, as likewise ways prescribed to distinguish them from false suggestions of the devil or corrupt nature, are so largely, clearly, and even in the very phrases of this book delivered by the former of the two in his book called *Les Secrets de la Science des Saints* (tr. iii. cap. ix. from p. 402 to p. 486), that, it not being credible that he had seen our V. F. A. Baker's writings, we may rationally infer that what he writes with such extraordinary exactness proceeded from a deep and experimental knowledge of these internal and secret paths of contemplation.

44. So that no doubt there are many devout persons in the society who, not being engaged in many external employments, and enjoying consequently both a solitude and liberty of spirit greater perhaps than will be afforded in many communities by profession purely contemplative, do permit themselves to the divine conduct, and make wonderful progress in these divine ways.

45. True indeed it is that the other author (F. Andr. Baiole) seems to maintain that the spiritual exercises, according to the intention of St. Ignatius, will, by practice, become a prayer of contemplation and mystic union, an assertion in which I have not yet found any to join with him. But, however, he shows in his book (styled *La Vie Intérieure*) that he had a true notion of the prayer of mystic union. And that being so, he may freely enjoy the contentment of the former supposition.

48. Besides these, there may possibly be other passages that thou also, devout reader, if thou hadst had the perusal before the impression, wouldst perhaps have given us occasion to explain or interpret more at large. If it prove so, all we can do is to refer them to thine own candour and charity, promising upon a re-impression all satisfaction possible; and in the mean time requesting that our own good intention and the judgment of our superiors and approvers may

be our safeguard. Only one suit we make unto thee (most reasonable and just), which is, that thou wouldst not proceed to the censure of any passage till thou hast read the whole book. The same points and matters do occasionally come in several places, and it would have been too great a tiring of thee to repeat in every place all the circumstances and phrases necessary for explanation or prevention of suspicions and objections. If it be for thine own good principally that thou art a reader, we shall stand in little need of preparing thee with apologies. And if it be for our hurt that thou art a reader, we thank God we are not guilty of the least ill design to make us fear, except only in thy behalf. All that we have to say is, God Almighty make thee (whosoever thou art) a practiser of the good that thou wilt certainly find in the following treatises; and then we shall have no cause to apprehend either for thee or ourselves.

47. Thus, truly, for aught appears to me, devout reader, thou mayest freely, and without the least apprehension of any danger, peruse and make thy best benefit of these following instructions; the which, moreover, as thou seest, have passed the censure and deserved the approbations of several pious and learned persons. Whatever opinion thou shalt, after reading, have of them, at least I will oblige thee to acknowledge that here (in the treatises that follow) is no manner of covert indirect meaning or design (according to the fashion nowadays) to broach any bold new-fangled inventions, and much less of maintaining unduly what shall be duly found fault with, since they are exposed to the common view by one that (as he hitherto hath so) here he doth (and by God's grace ever will) submit himself and his writings to the authority and judgment of the See Apostolic in the first place, and next to all other his superiors. This I profess, as is the duty of an humble, obedient son of the Church. And this, if I did not moreover expressly signify with reference to the doctrines contained in the following treatises, I could not avoid some degree of guilt and imputation of not delivering candidly and faithfully our Venerable Author's sense, who in many places protesteth the like submission of all his writings to all lawful authority whatsoever.

Farewell, dear reader. *Oremus invicem, ut salvemur.* AMEN

Of an Internal Life in General

The First Treatise

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First Section

Of a Contemplative Life

Nature & Ends of an Internal Life

§§ 1-3. Continual union in spirit with God the end of man's creation, and practised by Adam in innocence.

§§ 4. 5. Man's fall and misery through sin.

§§ 6, 7. Which is transfused into us and all his posterity.

§§ 8, 9. The reparation of mankind by Christ.

§§ 10, 11. That all Christians are obliged to aspire to perfection in divine love by the ways of prayer, &c., as Adam did.

1 . It was only infinite goodness that moved Almighty God to create the world of nothing, and particularly in this inferior visible world, to create man after His own image and similitude, consisting of a frail earthly body, which is the prison of an immortal, intellectual spirit, to the end that by his understanding, which is capable of an unlimited knowledge, and by his will, which cannot be replenished with any object of goodness less than infinite, he might so govern and order himself, and all other visible creatures, as thereby to arrive unto the end for which he was made, to wit, eternal beatitude both in soul and body in heaven, the which consists in a returning to the divine principle from whom he flowed, and an inconceivably happy union with Him, both in mind, contemplating eternally His infinite perfections, and in will and affections eternally loving, admiring, and enjoying the said perfections.

2. Now to the end that man might not (except by his own free and willful choice of misery) fail from attaining to the only universal end of his creation, God was pleased to the natural vast capacity of man's understanding and will

to add a supernatural light, illustrating his mind to believe and know Him, and divine charity in the will, which was as it were a weight to incline and draw the soul, without any defect or interruption to love God, and Him only. So that by a continual presence of this light, and an uninterrupted exercise of this love, the soul of man would in time have attained to such a measure of perfection of union with God in this world, as without dying to merit a translation from hence to heaven, there eternally to enjoy a far more incomprehensibly perfect and beatifying union with God.

3. Hence it appears that the means to happiness, and the end itself, are essentially the same thing, to wit, union of the spirit with God, and differ only in degrees. And the union which Adam during his state of innocence did and would always have practised was in a sort perpetual, never being interrupted (except perhaps in sleep). For, loving God only and purely for Himself, he had no strange affection to distract him, and the images of creatures, which either by his consideration of them, or operations about them, did adhere to his internal senses, did not at all divert his mind from God, because he contemplated them only in order to God; or rather he contemplated God alone in them, loving and serving Him only in all his reflections on them, or workings about them. So that creatures and all offices towards them served as steps to raise Adam to a more sublime and more intimate union with God; the which was both his duty and his present happiness, besides that it was a disposition to his future eternal beatitude.

4. But our first parents by a willful contempt and transgression of that one most easy command, which God for a trial of their obedience had imposed on them, not only broke the foresaid union, and deprived themselves of the hope of enjoying God eternally in the future life, but moreover were utterly divested of all supernatural graces, and extremely weakened and disordered in all their natural gifts. So that having lost that divine light, by which their understandings had been illustrated, and that divine love by which their wills and affections adhered continually to God, they were rendered incapable either of contemplating God (except only as a severe judge and avenger), or consequently of affording Him any degree of love. On the contrary, both their minds and affections were

only employed on themselves, or on creatures, for their own natural, carnal interests or pleasure; and this with such a violent obstinacy and firmness, that it was impossible for them by any force left in corrupt nature to raise their love towards God, being once so impetuously precipitated from Him towards themselves.

5. All these miserable depravations having been caused in all the powers and faculties of their souls by the forbidden fruit, the which utterly and irreparably disordered that most healthful, exact temper of their bodily constitutions; insomuch as the spirits and humours, &c., which before did nothing at all hinder their exercisings and operations towards God, but did much promote them, now did wholly dispose them to love and seek themselves only, with an utter aversion from God, and the accomplishing of His divine will; and all circumstant creatures, instead of being steps to raise them towards God, on the contrary more and more seduced their affections from Him, and raised all other inordinate passions displeasing to Him. Hereby in lieu of that peaceable and happy condition which they before enjoyed in this world by a continual union with God (the which was to be perfected eternally in the world to come), they became disquieted, distracted, and even torn asunder with a multitude of passions and designs, oft contrary to one another, but all of them much more opposite to God; so that by falling from unity to a miserable multiplicity, and from peace to an endless war, they were therein captivated by the devil, readily yielding to all his suggestions, hateful to and hating God, and so contracted not only an unavoidable necessity of a corporal death, but also the guilt and right to an eternal separation from God after death in that lake of fire and brimstone burning for ever, and prepared for the devil and his angels.

6. Now the whole stock of human nature being thus totally and universally depraved in our first parents, it could not by any possible natural means be avoided, but that all their posterity should be equally infected and poisoned with all these disorders, all which were increased and daily heightened by ill education and actual transgressions. And consequently the same guilt both of temporal and eternal death was withal transfused upon them.

7. But Almighty God, the Father of mercies, pitying His own creatures thus ingulfed in utter misery by the fault of Adam, seduced by his and our common enemy, did in His most unspeakable mercy, freely and unasked, provide and ordain His own coeternal Son to be a Saviour unto mankind; who by His most bitter sufferings and death redeemed us from the guilt of eternal death; and by His glorious life and resurrection, having obtained a power of sending the Holy Ghost (communicated to us in His word and sacraments, &c.), He hath rectified all these disorders, shedding forth a new heavenly light to cure the blindness of our understandings, and divine charity in our hearts, the which abateth that inordinate self-love formerly reigning in us, and hereby He reinstates us (coöperating with His divine grace, and persevering therein) to a new right unto eternal happiness, (perhaps) more sublime than man in innocency was destined to.

8. Notwithstanding, it was not the good will and pleasure of God by this reparation to restore us to the same state of perfect holiness wherein Adam lived in paradise. And this we ought to ascribe to His infinite wisdom, and also to His unspeakable goodness towards us; for certainly, if we had been once more left, as Adam was, in the free power of our own wills, that is, in so casual an estate as Adam was, and assisted and fortified with no stronger an aid than the primitive grace, we should again have irreparably forfeited all our happiness, and plunged ourselves far more deeply in endless misery.

9. Therefore, Almighty God thought fit for our humiliation, and to keep us in continual vigilance and fear, as also thereby daily to refresh the memory of our primitive guilt, and our thankfulness for His inestimable goodness, to leave us in a necessity of incurring temporal death, which we are not now to look on as a punishment of sin, so much as a freedom from sin, and a gate and entrance to eternal glory. Moreover, though by His grace He hath abolished the guilt of original sin, yet He hath suffered still to remain in us many bitter effects of it, the which shall never in this life be so wholly extinguished by grace, or our holy endeavours, but that some degrees of ignorance and inclinations to that pernicious love of ourselves will remain in us; by which means we are preserved from our greatest enemy, pride, and also forced to a continual watchfulness and

combat against ourselves, and our spiritual enemies; always distrusting ourselves and relying upon the medicinal omnipotent regenerating grace of Christ, far more helpful to us than the grace of innocency was, in that it not only more powerfully inclines our wills and conquers the actual resistance of them, by making them freely coöperate with it, whensoever they do coöperate (for it takes not away our liberty to resist), but likewise after it hath been weakened by venial sins, and extinguished by mortal, it is again and again renewed by the means of the sacraments and prayer, &c.

10. Our duty therefore in our present state, and the employment of our whole lives, must be constantly and fervently to coöperate with divine grace, thereby endeavouring not only to get victory over self-love, pride, sensuality, &c., by humility, divine love, and all other virtues; but also not to content ourselves with any limited degrees of piety and holiness, but daily to aspire, according to our abilities assisted with grace by the same ways to the same perfection for which we were first created, and which was practised by Adam in innocency; to wit, an utter extinguishing of self-love and all affection to creatures, except in order to God, and as they may be instrumental to beget and increase divine love in us; and a continual uninterrupted union in spirit with God, by faith contemplating Him, and by love ever adhering to Him.

11. This, I say, is the duty and indispensable obligation of all Christians, of what condition soever, not only seriously to aspire to the divine love, but also to the perfection thereof suitably to their several states and vocations, for it is morally impossible for a soul to love God, as He ought to be loved (that is, as the only object of her love, and as the only universal end of her being and life, for the procuring of an inseparable union with whom and for no other reason the use and comfort of creatures was permitted and given to her), I say, it is morally impossible for such a soul so loving God deliberately and habitually to yield to the love of anything but God only, and in order to Him; or to stop in any inferior degree of love to Him. The frailty of nature and many unavoidable distractions and temptations may and generally do hinder most souls from attaining or even approaching to such perfection, to such uninterrupted attention and union with God, as was practised by Adam in innocency, and by a few perfect souls

in all ages; but nothing but the want of true sincere love will hinder the aspiring thereto, according to the measure and strength of grace that each soul in her order enjoys. And both reason and experience witness this truth in all manner of loves, lawful or unlawful; for we see that wheresoever the love to riches, honour, empire, or pleasure is the tyrannising affection, so as to cause the person to place his supposed happiness in any of these, such persons neither will nor can, being so disposed, willfully surcease a continual progress in pursuing their designs endlessly; neither can they admit an habitual and deliberate adherence with affection to any other object, though (not ruinous, but) in an inferior degree prejudicial to what they principally affect.

Natural Propensions to Devotion

§ 1. Commonly those only are said to aspire to perfection that consecrate themselves to God.

§ 2. A natural devotion and propension to seek God, of which the degrees are infinitely various.

§§ 3, 4, 5. Yet all ranged under two states—Active and Contemplative.

§§ 6, 7. Generally most souls are of a mixed temper between both; hence comes the difficulty of the guiding of souls.

§ 8. At the first entrance into internal ways all souls seem to be of an Active temper.

1. Notwithstanding although all Christians are obliged to aspire to perfection, and to lead spiritual lives, sanctifying all their actions and employments by prayer, yet the effectual practice of this obligation is so very rare that in ordinary speech those only are said to aspire unto perfection who have been so highly favoured by God, as to have been called by Him from all solicitous engagement in worldly affairs, so as to make the only business and employment of their lives to be the serving, adoring, loving, meditating, and praying unto God, the attending to and following His divine inspirations, &c., in a state of competent abstraction and solitude; and this most ordinarily and perfectly in a religious profession, or if in the world, yet in a course of life divided and separated from the world.

2. There seems indeed to remain even naturally in all souls a certain propension to seek God (though not at all for Himself, but merely for the satisfaction

of nature, and self-ends), which is a kind of natural devotion, and is to be found even in heretics, yea, Jews and heathens; and this more or less according to their several dispositions and corporal complexions, the variety of which is wonderful and almost incredible. Now when divine grace adjoins itself to such good propensions, it promotes and increases them, rectifying what is amiss in them, especially by purifying the intention and making them to seek God only for God himself, and no unworthy inferior ends of nature; but it doth not at all alter the complexion itself, but conducts souls in spiritual ways suitably to their several dispositions by an almost infinite variety of paths and fashions, yet all tending to the same general end, which is the union of our spirits with God by perfect love.

3. Notwithstanding all these varieties of dispositions and ways (of which we shall treat more fully when we come to speak of internal prayer) may commodiously enough be reduced in gross to two ranks, to wit, Active and Contemplative spirits: both which aspire to a perfection of union in spirit with God by perfect love; and for that purpose in gross practice make use of the same means necessary to that end, to wit, mortification and prayer. But yet the manner both of their union and prayer, and consequently of their mortification also is very different; and the root of such difference is the forementioned variety of propensions and natural dispositions to internal ways.

4. For, first, the propension which is in some souls to devotion is of such a nature that it inclines them much to busy their imagination and to frame in their minds motives to the divine love by internal discourse, so as that without such reasoning and use of images they can seldom with any efficacy raise or fix their affections on God. Such dispositions are not patient of much solitude or recollection more than shall be necessary to enable them to produce and maintain a right intention in outward doings and works of charity, to the which they are powerfully inclined; and the mortifications most willingly practised by them are usually external, and oftentimes voluntarily assumed, the which make a great show and procure very great esteem from others. And proportionably hereto the divine love and union produced by such means is very vigorous, but less pure and spiritual, apt to express itself by much sensible devotion and

tenderness. The state therefore and perfection of these souls is called the state and perfection of an Active life.

5. Again, others are naturally of a propension to seek God in the obscurity of faith, with a more profound introversion of spirit, and with less activity and motion in sensitive nature, and without the use of grosser images, yet with far greater simplicity, purity, and efficacy. And consequently such souls are not of themselves much inclined to external works (except when God calls them thereto by secret inspirations, or engages them therein by command of superiors), but they seek rather to purify themselves and inflame their hearts in the love of God by internal, quiet, and pure actuations in spirit, by a total abstraction from creatures, by solitude, both external and especially internal, so disposing themselves to receive the influxes and inspirations of God, whose guidance chiefly they endeavour to follow in all things. And the mortifications practised by them, though less remarkable, yet are far more efficacious, being profound and penetrating even to the most secret deordinations of the spirit. By a constant pursuance of such exercises, their spirits becoming naked and empty of all strange affections, images, and distractions, the Divine Spirit only lives and operates in them, affording them light to perceive and strength to subdue self-love in its most secret and, to all others, imperceptible insinuations; and by consequence they attain unto an union with God far more strict and immediate than the former, by a love much more masculine, pure, and divine. And the state and perfection of these happy souls is called the state and perfection of a Contemplative life.

6. Now, though all internal dispositions of souls (by which mankind is more diversified than by outward features) may conveniently enough be ranged under these two states, yet we are not to conceive that each soul is by its temper entirely and absolutely either contemplative or active; for, on the contrary, the most part are of a disposition mixed between both, and partaking somewhat, more or less, of each. But they receive the denomination from that whereto the propension is more strong.

7. And from hence comes that great difficulty that there is in the conducting and managing of souls in these internal ways; for each several disposition must

be put in a way suitable to the spirit of the party, otherwise small progress can be expected. Now, that wherein the diversity of spirits is principally discerned is their prayer. If therefore an active spirit should be obliged to that internal solitude, to that quiet affective prayer of the heart alone which is proper to contemplative souls; or if a contemplative spirit should be too long detained or fettered with the rules and busy methods of discursive meditation (which is a prayer chiefly of the head or imagination); or, lastly, if a spirit of a mixed disposition should be strictly confined to either of these sorts of prayer and not allowed to practise them interchangeably according as she finds profitable to her present temper of mind, &c., they would entangle themselves with insuperable difficulties, scrupulosities, and unsatisfaction, and be so far from any considerable advancement, that they would be in danger of giving over all thought of seeking God internally.

8. Notwithstanding, although the propensions of some souls to internal operations of the spirit, and consequently to contemplation, were never so strong, yet at their first entrance into a spiritual course they will, ordinarily speaking, seem to be of an active, extroverted temper, and consequently will not be capable of a long-continued rigorous solitude, nor of operations purely spiritual. They will therefore be forced to begin with exercises of the imagination and discursive prayer. And the reason is, because by their former secular, negligent, and extroverted life, their mind is so filled and painted all over with the images of creatures, and their hearts so disordered and divided with inordinate affections and passions, that the will alone, with its actuations, purposes, and resolutions, has not power to expel the said images and to assuage the said passions; so that there is a necessity by meditation and consideration, of introducing good images to expel the vain and bad ones, and of inventing motives to quiet passions by diverting them upon God. But this being once done by the exercises proper to an active life (which to such souls will not need to last long), they thenceforwards are to betake themselves, and always to continue in such internal exercises as are suitable to their natural propensions, to wit, the quiet, solitary, spiritual exercises of a *contemplative life*.

A State Contemplative and Active

§ 1. The contemplative state more perfect.

§ 2. And also more easy and secure.

§ 3. Of which yet the most simple and ignorant are capable.

§§ 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. The end of a contemplative life supereminently excellent above that of the active, and the union with God more Divine.

§ 11. Of passive unions therein, yet more supernatural.

1 . Of these two states, the contemplative is by all acknowledged to be the more sublime and perfect, inasmuch as the operations and exercises of it are more spiritual, more abstracted from the body and its sensual faculties, and consequently more angelical and divine. It is represented to us by our Lord in the person of Mary, who is therefore said to have chosen the best part, which shall never be taken from her, being the beginning and imperfect practice of that which shall be our eternal employment and beatitude in heaven. As on the other side the active life is typified by the other sister Martha, who turmoiled herself with many exterior businesses and solitudes, which though they were in themselves good and laudable, yet Mary's vacancy and inward attention to our Lord is much preferred.

2. And as the contemplative state is of the two the more perfect, so also is it far more easy, more simple, and more secure from all errors and illusions which may be occasioned by an indiscreet use of prayer. And the reason or ground of such security is evident, because a contemplative soul tending to God and working almost only with the heart and blind affections of the will pouring

themselves upon God apprehended only in the obscure notion of faith, not inquiring what He is, but believing Him to be that incomprehensible Being which He is, and which can only be comprehended by Himself, rejecting and striving to forget all images and representations of Him, or anything else; yea, transcending all operations of the imagination, and all subtlety and curiosity of reasoning; and lastly, seeking an union with God only by the most pure and most intine affections of the spirit: what possibility of illusion or error can there be to such a soul? For if the devil should suggest an image (which is his only means and way to seduce a soul to error and a sinful curiosity of knowledge), she is taught and exercised to reject all manner of images, and to hold the internal senses almost wholly vacant during her spiritual actuations. Or, if by stirring up unclean or other unlawful affections in sensitive nature, he seek to assault her, what more secure remedy is there than with the whole bent and affections of the soul to adhere and be united to God, neglecting and scarce marking whatsoever disorders may unwillingly happen in inferior nature, above which she is exalted into a region of light and peace?

3. Now, for a further proof of the excellency and security of contemplative prayer beyond active, experience demonstrates that all the most sublime exercises of contemplation may as purely and perfectly be performed by persons the most ignorant and unlearned (so they be sufficiently instructed in the fundamental doctrines of Catholic faith) as by the learnedst doctors, inasmuch as not any abilities in the brain are requisite thereto, but only a strong courageous affection of the heart. Hence it is that we see that simple unlearned women are more frequently graced by Almighty God with the gift of high contemplation than men, and especially such men as are much given to sublime speculations. A reason whereof may be (besides that God reveals Himself more willingly to humble and simple minds) because by means of that tenderness and compassionateness which abounds naturally in women, they are disposed to a greater fervour in charity, and their affections being once fixed on their only proper object, which is God, they do more vigorously and firmly adhere thereunto, and by consequence arrive both more easily and quickly to the perfection of contemplation, which consists (as shall hereafter be shown) in the fervour and

constancy of the will united to God, and scarce at all in the operations of the understanding.

Now this present treatise being intended only for encouraging and instructing of persons that aspire to perfection in a contemplative life, and more especially for the discovering of the several degrees of prayer proper for that state, reason requires that, since in all doctrines which tend to practice the end is principally to be regarded as being that which, if it can be approved worthy the taking pains for, will give life and courage in the use of the means conducing thereto, we should treat more precisely of the proper end of a contemplative life, the which indeed is of so supreme an excellence and divine profection above anything that can be designed or sought after in any other doctrine or profession, that those who have eyes to see it and palates capable of a spiritual tasting of it, will think no difficulties, no tediousnesses, no bitternesses or labours too great a price to purchase it.

4. It was said before that the general end of man's creation, and which ought to be aspired unto by all Christians, and much more those whose more special profession is to tend to perfection, whether in an active or a contemplative state, is a perfect and constant union in spirit to God by love, which is uninterrupted perfect prayer. But the same end is differently sought and attained by active and by contemplative spirits; for in an active life the union is not so immediate, stable, sublime, and intime of the supreme portion of the spirit with God, as it is in a ⁴¹contemplative state. But as the exercises of the active lives are much in the imaginative and discursive faculties of the soul, so is likewise their union. The effects indeed of it are more perceptible, and therefore more apt to cause admiration in others; but withal, being much in sense, it is not so clear nor so peaceful, and by consequence not so stable nor immediate as is that of contemplatives. The charity of actives is strong and vigorous, and the outward effects of it dazzling the eyes of the beholders, and thereby causing great edification; they are withal frequently multiplied, for strong love is a passion that takes pleasure in labours. Whereas the deeds of contemplative souls (except when God by an extraordinary inspiration calls them to exterior employments) are but few, and in appearance but small, and little regarded or esteemed by others. Yet those

mean actions of theirs in God's esteem may be preferred incomparably before the others, as being in a far more perfect degree supernatural and divine, as proceeding from an immediate and most certain impulse of God's Holy Spirit, whose conduct, light, and virtue such souls do far more clearly perceive, and more faithfully and constantly follow, even in their daily and ordinary practices, than active lovers do or can in their actions of highest importance. Lastly, the charity of contemplatives, though it be less stirring and busy, yet is far more profoundly rooted in the centre of the spirit, causing an union much more spiritual and divine.

5. St. Bernard, perfectly experienced in the internal ways of a contemplative life, writing to certain religious Fathers of the Carthusian Order, professing the same, excellently expresses this union in these words: *Aliorum est Deo servire; vestrum adherere. Aliorum est Deo credere, scire, amare, revereri; vestrum est sapere, intelligere, cognoscere, frui*; that is, It is the duty of others (that live active lives either in the world or religion) to serve God; but it is yours to adhere inseparably unto Him. It belongs to others to believe, to know, to love, to adore God; but to you to taste, to understand, to be familiarly acquainted with, and to enjoy Him.

6. Constantly to this expression of St. Bernard, mystic writers do teach that the proper end of a contemplative life is the attaining unto an habitual and almost uninterrupted perfect union with God in the supreme point of the spirit; and such an union as gives the soul a fruitive possession of Him, and a real experimental perception of His divine presence in the depth and centre of the spirit, which is fully possessed and filled with Him alone; not only all deliberate affections to creatures being excluded, but in a manner all images of them also, at least so far as they may be distractive to the soul.

7. The effects of this blessed, perceptible presence of God in perfect souls are unspeakable and divine; for He is in them both as a principle of all their actions internal and external, being the life of their life and spirit of their spirits; and also as the end of them, directing both the actions and persons to Himself only. He is all in all things unto them: a light to direct securely all their steps, and to order all their workings, even those also which seem the most indifferent, the

which by the guidance of God's Holy Spirit do cause a farther advancement of them to a yet more immediate union. He is a shield to protect them in all temptations and dangers, an internal force and vigour within them, to make them do and suffer all things whatsoever His pleasure is they should do or suffer. They not only believe and know, but even feel and taste Him to be the universal, infinite Good. By means of a continual conversation with Him they are reduced to a blessed state of a perfect denudation of spirit, to an absolute, internal solitude, a transcendancy and forgetfulness of all created things, and especially of themselves, to an heavenly-mindedness and fixed attention to God only, and this even in the midst of employments to others never so distractive; and finally, to a gustful knowledge of all His infinite perfections, and a strict application of their spirits by love above knowledge, joined with a fruition and repose in Him with the whole extent of their wills; so that they become after an inexpressible manner partakers of the divine nature; yea, one spirit, one will, one love with Him, being in a sort deified, and enjoying as much of heaven here as mortality is capable of.

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8. To this purpose saith the same St. Bernard: *Amor Dei, vel amor Deus, Spiritus Sanctus amori hominis se infundens, afficit eum sibi, et amans semetipsum de homine Deus, secum unum efficit et spiritum ejus, et amorem ejus*; that is, The love of God, or love which is God, to wit, the Holy Ghost pouring himself into the love of man (inclineth and) applieth man by love unto Himself; and thus God, loving Himself by man, maketh both his spirit and love one with Himself.

9. A most blessed state this is certainly, being the portion chosen by Mary, which our Lord Himself calls *optimam partem*, the very best of all divine graces which God can bestow in this life; and wherewith He enriched in a singular manner those His two most highly favoured and most tenderly loved friends, St. John the Evangelist, and St. Mary Magdalen; but in a yet more supereminent degree His own most heavenly Virgin-Mother.

10. Happy, therefore, are those souls upon which God bestows a desire and ambition so glorious as seriously and effectually to tend, aspire, and endeavour the compassing a design so heavenly: qualifying them not only with good

natural propensions to those internal ways of love leading to this end, but also calling them to a state of life abstracted from the world, the vanities and solitudes of it; and with all supernatural light to direct them in the secret paths of this love; and lastly, strong resolutions, and perseverance with courage to break through all discouragements, difficulties, persecutions, aridities, and whatsoever oppositions shall be made against them either from concupiscence within, or the world without, or the devil joining with both against a design of all others most hurtful to him and most destructive to his pretensions.

11. And for a yet further and greater encouragement unto them to embrace and prosecute so glorious a design, they may take notice that, besides this (hitherto described) happy union of a contemplative soul with God by perfect charity, in the which the soul herself actively concurs, not only as to the fruition, but also in the disposing herself immediately thereto, there are other unions entirely supernatural, not at all procured, or so much as ⁴⁴intended by the soul herself, but graciously and freely conferred by God upon some souls, in the which He, after a wonderful and inconceivable manner, affords them interior illuminations and touches, yet far more efficacious and divine: in all which the soul is a mere patient, and only suffers God to work His divine pleasure in her, being neither able to further nor hinder it; the which unions, though they last but even as it were a moment of time, yet do more illuminate and purify the soul than many years spent in active exercises of spiritual prayer or mortification could do.

Necessity of a Strong Resolution

§§ 1, 2, 3, 4. A strong resolution necessary in the beginning.

§§ 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Considering first the length and tediousness of the way to
perfection in mortification,

§§ 10, 11. And also many degrees of prayer to be passed,

§ 12. Therefore it is seldom attained, and not till a declining age,

§ 13. Except by God's extraordinary favour to a few.

§ 14. Yet old and young ought to enter into the way.

§ 15. A motive to resolution are the difficulties in the way

§§ 16 &c. And those both from without and within.

1 . The end of a contemplative life, therefore, being so supereminently noble and divine that beatified souls do prosecute the same, and no other, in heaven, with this only difference, that the same beatifying object which is now obscurely seen by faith and imperfectly embraced by love shall hereafter be seen clearly and perfectly enjoyed, the primary and most general duty required in souls which by God's vocation do walk in the ways of the spirit, is to admire, love, and long after this union, and to fix an immovable resolution through God's grace and assistance to attempt and persevere in the prosecution of so glorious a design, in despite of all opposition, through light and darkness, through consolations and desolations, &c., as esteeming it to be cheaply purchased, though with the loss of all comforts that nature can find or expect in creatures.

2. The fixing of such a courageous resolution is of so main importance and necessity that if it should happen to fail or yield to any, though the fiercest

temptations, that may occur and are to be expected, so as not to be reassumed, the whole design will be ruined; and therefore devout souls are oftentimes to renew such a resolution, and especially when any difficulty presents itself; and for that purpose they will oft be put in mind thereof in these following instructions.

3. It is not to be esteemed loftiness, presumption, or pride to tend to so sublime an end; but it is a good and laudable ambition, and most acceptable to God; yea, the root of it is true, solid humility joined with the love of God; for it proceeds from a vile esteem and some degrees of a holy hatred of ourselves, from whom we desire to fly; and a just esteem, obedience, and love of God, to whom only we desire to adhere and be inseparably united.

4. Happy, therefore, is the soul that finds in herself an habitual thirst and longing after this union, if she will seek to assuage it by continual approaches to this Fountain of living waters, labouring thereto with daily external and internal workings. The very tendence to this union, in which our whole essential happiness consists, has in it some degrees of happiness, and is an imperfect union, disposing to a perfect one; for by such internal tendence and aspiring we get by little and little out of nature into God. And that without such an interior tendence and desire no exterior sufferances or observances will imprint any true virtue in the soul, or bring her nearer to God, we see in the example of Suso, who for the first five years of a religious profession found no satisfaction in soul at all, notwithstanding all his care and exactness in exterior regular observances and mortifications: he perceived plainly that still he wanted something, but what that was he could not tell, till God was pleased to discover it to him, and put him in the way to attain to his desire, which was in spirit to tend continually to this union, without which all his austerities and observances served little or nothing, as proceeding principally from self-love, self-judgment, and the satisfying of nature even by crossing it.

Let nothing, therefore, deter a well-minded soul from persevering with fervour in this firm resolution. No, not the sight of her daily defects, imperfections, or sins, or remorse for them; but rather let her increase in courage even from her falls, and from the experience of her own impotency let her be incited to run

more earnestly and adhere more firmly unto God, by whom she will be enabled to do all things and conquer all resistances.

5. Now to the end that all sincerity may be used in the delivery of these instructions, and that all vain compliance and flattery may be avoided, the devout soul is to be informed that the way to perfection is, 1. both a very long, tedious way; and, 2. withal there are to be expected in it many grievous, painful, and bitter temptations and crosses to corrupt nature; as being a way that wholly and universally contradicts and destroys all the vain eases, contentments, interests, and designs of nature, teaching a soul to die unto self-love, self-judgment, and all propriety, and to raise herself out of nature, seeking to live in a region exalted above nature: to wit, the region of the spirit; into which being once come, she will find nothing but light and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The which difficulties considered, instead of being discouraged, she will, if she be truly touched with God's Spirit, rather increase her fervour and courage to pursue a design so noble and divine, for which alone she was created; especially, 3. considering the infinite danger of a negligent, tepid, and spiritually slothful life, and likewise the security and benefit of being but truly in the way to perfection, though she should never attain to it in this life.

6. First, therefore, to demonstrate that the way to perfection must needs be long and tedious, even to souls well-disposed thereto both by nature and education (for to others it is a way unpassable without extreme difficulty), this will easily be acknowledged by any well-minded soul that by her own experience will consider how obstinate, inflexible, and of how gluey and tenacious a nature corrupt self-love is in her; how long a time must pass before she can subdue any one habitual ill inclination and affection in herself. What fallings and risings again there are in our passions and corrupt desires, insomuch as when they seem to be quite mortified and almost forgotten, they will again raise themselves and combat us with as great or perhaps greater violence than before. Now till the poisonous root of self-love be withered, so as that we do not knowingly and deliberately suffer it to spring forth and bear fruit (for utterly killed it never will be in this life); till we have lost at least all affection to all our corrupt desires, even the most venial, which are almost infinite, perfect charity will never reign in our

souls, and consequently perfect union in spirit with God cannot be expected; for charity lives and grows according to the measure that self-love is abated, and no further.

7. Souls that first enter into the internal ways of the spirit, or that have made no great progress in them, are guided by a very dim light, being able to discover and discern only a few grosser defects and inordinations; but by persevering in the exercises of mortification and prayer, this light will be increased, and then they will proportionably every day more and more discover a thousand secret and formerly invisible impurities in their intentions, self-seekings, hypocrisies, and close designs of nature, pursuing her own corrupt designs in the very best actions, cherishing nature one way when she mortifies it another, and favouring pride even when she exercises humility. Now a clear light to discover all these almost infinite depravations not only in our sensitive nature, but also in the superior soul (which are far more secret, manifold, and dangerous), and a courage with success to combat and overcome them, must be the effect of a long-continued practice of prayer and mortification.

8. The want of a due knowledge or consideration hereof is the cause that some good souls, after they have made some progress in internal ways, becomes disheartened, and in danger to stop or quite leave them; for though at the first, being (as usually they are) prevented by God with a tender sensible devotion (which our Holy Father calls *fervorem novitium*), they do with much zeal and, as it seems to them., with good effect begin the exercises of mortification and prayer; yet afterward, such sensible fervour and tenderness ceasing (as it seldom fails to do) by that new light which they have gotten, they discern a world of defects, formerly undiscovered, which they erroneously think were not in them before; whereupon, fearing that instead of making progress, they are in a worse state than when they began, they will be apt to suspect that they are in a wrong way. This proceeds from a preconceived mistake, that because in times of light and devotion the soul finds herself carried with much fervour to God, and perceives but small contradictions and rebellions in inferior nature, therefore she is very forward in the way to perfection. Whereas it is far otherwise; for nature is not so easily conquered as she imagines, neither is the way to perfection

so easy and short. Many changes she must expect; many risings and fallings; sometimes light, and sometimes darkness; sometimes calmness of passions, and presently after, it may be, fiercer combats than before; and these successions of changes repeated, God knows how oft, before the end approacheth.

9. Yea, it will likely happen to such souls, that even the formerly well-known grosser defects in them will seem to increase, and to grow more hard to be quelled after they have been competently advanced in internal ways; and the reason is, because, having set themselves to combat corrupt nature in all her perverse, crooked, and impure desires, and being sequestered from the vanities of the world, they find themselves in continual wrestlings and agonies, and want those pleasing diversions, conversations, and recreations, with which, whilst they lived a secular, negligent life, they could interrupt or put off their melancholic thoughts and unquietness. But if they would take courage and, instead of seeking ease from nature (further than discretion allows), have recourse for remedy by prayer to God, they would find that such violent temptations are an assured sign that they are in a secure and happy way, and that when God sees it is best for them, they shall come off from such combats with victory and comfort.

10. Now, as from the consideration of the tediousness of a perfect universal mortification of the corrupt affections of nature, it does appear that hasty perfection is not ordinarily to be expected, and where there are appearances of extraordinary lights and supernatural visits in souls not thoroughly mortified, it is to be feared that there hath been some secret exorbitancy in the proceedings of such souls, some deeply rooted pride, &c., which hath exposed them to the devil's illusions, so that their state is very dangerous, the like will appear if we cast our eyes upon the nature and degrees of internal prayer, in the perfection of which the end of a contemplative life, which is perfect union in spirit with God, doth consist.

11. For a soul must, 1. ordinarily speaking, pass through the way of external and imaginary exercises of prayer, in the which she must tarry, God knows how long; yea, without a discreet diligence and constancy in them, she may perhaps end her days therein. 2. Then when her affections do so abound, and are sufficiently ripe, so as that discourse is not needful or becomes of little efficacy,

she is to betake herself to the exercise of the will, in the which a very long time must ordinarily be spent before she can chase away distracting grosser images, and before the heart be so replenished with the Divine Spirit that, without any election or deliberation, it will of itself almost continually break forth into aspirations and pure elevations of the superior will. 3. Being arrived to this happy state, only God knows for how long a time she is to continue therein, there being almost infinite degrees of aspirations, each one exceeding the former in purity, before she be ripe for the divine inaction. 4. And having gotten that, a very long time is like to be spent, very oft in most woeful obscurities and desolations, before she arrive, 5. to the state of perfection. Now all these degrees of prayer are to be attended with proportionable degrees of mortification; so that no wonder is it if so very few, even of those whose profession it is to aspire thereunto, do find or attain unto this end, partly out of ignorance and error, whilst they place perfection in an exact performance of outward observances and austerities, the which (though being well used they may be certainly very proper helps to perfection, and are accordingly to be duly esteemed, yet), if they be undertaken for any end of nature, and not for the purifying of the interior and disposing it for more perfect prayer, are of no value at all, but rather proceed from and nourish self-love, pride, &c., and partly out of want of courage and diligence to pursue constantly the way that they know leads thereto.

12. Upon these grounds mystic authors do teach that, though it be a very great advantage to a soul to tread in these internal ways from her youth, before she be darkened and made sick with vicious habits, the combating against which will cause great difficulty, pain, and tediousness to her, yet she will hardly arrive unto the aforesaid active union and experimental perception of God's presence in her till almost a declining age; by reason that though her natural ill inclinations may be mortified in a reasonable perfection before that time, yet till such age there will remain too much vigour in corporal nature, and an unstableness in the inward senses, which will hinder that quietness and composedness of mind necessary to such an union. Whereas some persons of a well-disposed temper and virtuous education have in a few years arrived thereunto, though they did not begin an internal course till their ripe age, but yet supplying that delay by an

heroical resolution and vigorous pursuit of the practices proper thereunto; but as for those that have been viciously bred, there will be necessary a wonderful measure of grace and very extraordinary mortifications before such souls can be fitted thereunto.

13. Now what hath been said concerning the length of the way, and the multiplicity of conditions requisite to the attaining to the end of it, is to be understood with relation to the ordinary course of God's providence. But God, who is the free Master and Disposer of His own graces, may bestow them upon whom and when He pleases, either miraculously increasing His grace in some souls, or conferring His supernatural favours before the time that they are ripe for them, as He did to St. Catharine of Siena (and some others), who, in their younger years, have been favoured with a passive union. Mystic authors, likewise, except from the ordinary course, the case where God upon the death of well-willed and well-disposed souls happening before perfection attained, supplieth after some extraordinary manner what was wanting, and effects that in a moment which would otherwise have required a long space of time; and this, say they, God frequently doth in regard of the serious and fervent wills that He seeth in such souls, which were resolved to prosecute the way of His love for all their lives, though they should have lasted never so long.

14. But be the way to perfection never so long, the design itself is so noble and the end so divine, that a soul cannot begin to aspire unto it too soon, nor take too much pains to procure it. Yea, the very desire and serious pursuance of so heavenly a design brings so great blessings to the soul, and puts her in so secure a way of salvation, though she should never perfectly attain unto it in this life, that there is none so old nor so overgrown with ill habits but ought to attempt, and with perseverance pursue it, being assured that at least after death he shall for his good desire and endeavours be rewarded with the crown due to contemplatives. For it is enough for a soul to be in the way, and to correspond to such enablements as she hath received; and then in what degree of spirit soever she dies, she dies according to the will and ordination of God, to whom she must be resigned, and consequently she will be very happy; whereas if, out of despair of attaining to perfection, she should rest and do as it were nothing, contenting

herself with outward ceremonious observances, she will be accounted before God as having been wanting to perform that whereto her profession obliged her. Though the truth is, the soul being a pure spirit, consisting of mere activity, cannot cease doing and desiring something; so that if her desires and operations be not directed to the right end, they will go a wrong way; and if a soul do not continually strive to get out of nature, she will plunge herself deeper and deeper into it.

15. The second motive to induce a soul to arm herself with a great courage and strong resolution in her tendence to perfection is because, as the wise man says, *He that sets himself to serve our Lord* (especially in so high and divine an employment as contemplation) *must prepare his soul for temptations* greater and more unusual than formerly he had experience of; the which temptations will come from all coasts, both from without and within.

16. For an internal life, being not only a life hidden from the world, but likewise directly contrary to the ways of carnal reason, yea, even different from common notion of virtue and piety which ordinary Christians, yea, too many even in religion have also, who approve only of actions and ways which outwardly make a fair show, as solemn performance of divine offices, external formal regularities, mortifications, &c; hence it is that very sharp persecutions have almost always attended those whom God hath called to revive the true spirit of religion (too generally decayed, and in many religious communities utterly unknown), by teaching souls not to neglect, but on the contrary to be very careful in an exact performance and just esteem of such duties; but yet to place perfection in exercises of the spirit, and to esteem all other observances no further than as they serve to advance and increase perfection in spirit; since most certain it is, that if in and for themselves alone and without any interior direction for the purifying of the soul they be esteemed (and performed) as parts of real perfection, and not chiefly as helps of internal devotion and purity, they will rather become hindrances to contemplation, nourishing pride, contempt of others, &c., and be the ruin of true charity. Examples of such persecutions are obvious in stories, witness the sufferings of Thaulerus, Suso, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, &c.

17. Again, in the world, the lives of those that God hath called to the exercises of an internal life, being so different from and unlike to others, though ordinary, well-meaning Christians, by reason that they abstract themselves from secular businesses (except such as necessarily belong to their vocation), likewise from worldly conventions, correspondence, and vainly complying friendships; hence it is that the sight of them is unacceptable to their neighbors and acquaintance, as if they did silently condemn their liberties. For this reason, they are apt to raise and disperse evil reports of them, calling them illuminates, pretenders to extraordinary visits and lights, persons that walk in *mirabilibus super se*, &c.; or at least to deride them as silly, seduced, melancholy spirits, that follow unusual and dangerous ways.

18. All these, and many others the like persecutions, calumnies, and contempts, a well-disposed soul that purely seeks God must expect and be armed against. And knowing that they do not come by chance, but by the most wise, holy, and merciful providence of God for her good, to exercise her courage in the beginning, and to give her an opportunity to testify her true esteem and love to God and spiritual things, let her hence not be affrighted, but rather pursue internal ways more vigorously, as knowing that there cannot be a better proof of the excellency of them than that they are displeasing to carnal or at least ignorant men unexperienced in such divine ways. Let her not with passion judge or condone those that are contrary to her, for many of them may have a good intention and zeal therein, though a zeal not directed by knowledge. If, therefore, she will attend God, following His divine inspirations, &c., she will see that God will give her light and courage, and much inward security in her way.

19. But her greatest and more frequent persecutions will be from her own corrupt nature and vicious habits rooted in the soul, the which will assault her many times with temptations and inward bitternesses and agonies, sharper and stranger than she did expect, or could perhaps imagine. And no wonder, for her design and continual endeavours both in mortification and prayer being to raise herself out of, and above nature, to contradict nature in all its vain pleasures and interests, she can expect no other, but that nature will continually

struggle against the spirit; especially being enflamed by the devil, who will not fail to employ all his arts, all his malice and fury, to disturb a design so utterly destructive to his infernal kingdom established in the souls of carnal men. The well-minded soul, therefore, must make a general strong resolution to bear all with as much quietness as may be, to distrust herself entirely, to rely only upon God, and to seek unto Him by prayer, and all will assuredly be well. She will find that the yoke of Christ, which at the first was burdensome, will, being borne with constancy, become easy and delightful; yea, though she should never be able to subdue the resistance of evil inclinations in her, yet as long as there remains in her a sincere endeavor after it, no such ill inclinations will hinder her happiness.

The Danger of a Tepid Life

§§ 1, 2. A third motive to resolution is the danger of tepidity, of which the nature and root is discovered.

§§ 3, 4, 5. The miseries of a tepid religious person that is ignorant of internal ways.

§§ 6, 7. Or of one that knows them, but neglects to pursue them.

§§ 8, 9. How pestilent such are in a community.

§ 10. On the other side, an indiscreet passionate fervour may be as dangerous as negligence.

1. A third yet more pressing motive to a courageous resolution of prosecuting internal ways once begun, and a strong proof of the extreme necessity thereof, is the consideration of the extreme danger and miseries unexpressible of a negligent and tepid life, whether in religion or in the world; the which not only renders perfection impossible to be attained, but endangers the very root of essential sanctity and all pretension to eternal happiness, as among other mystic writers, Harphius in his twelve mortifications earnestly demonstrates.

2. Tepidity is a bitter poisonous root fixed in the minds of negligent Christians, who though out of a servile fear they abstain from an habitual practice of acknowledged mortal actual sins, and therefore (groundlessly enough) think themselves secure from the danger of hell, yet they perform their external necessary obligations to God and their brethren sleepily and heartlessly, without any true affection, contenting themselves with the things however outwardly done; yea, perhaps knowing no perfection beyond this; but in the mean time remain

full of self-love, inward pride, sensual desires, aversion from internal conversation with God, &c. And the ground and cause of this pernicious tepidity is want of affection and esteem of spiritual things, and a voluntary affection to venial sins (not as they are sins, but as the objects of them are easeful or delightful to nature), joined with a willfulness not to avoid the occasions of them, nor to do any more in God's service than what themselves judge to be necessary for the escaping of hell.

3. Such persons, if they live in religion, must needs pass very uncomfortable and discontented lives, having excluded themselves from the vain entertainments and pleasures of the world, and yet retaining a strong affection to them in their hearts, with an incapacity of enjoying them. They must undergo all obligations, austerities, and crosses incident to a religious state without comfort, but only in having dispatched them, with very little benefit to their souls, and with extreme wearisomeness and unwillingness. Now, what a resemblance to hell hath such a life, where there is an impossibility freely to enjoy what the soul principally desires, and where she is forced continually to do and suffer such things as are extremely contrary to her inclinations!

4. Whereas, if souls would courageously at once give themselves wholly to God, and with a discreet fervour combat against corrupt nature, pursuing their internal exercises, they would find that all things would coöperate, not only to their eternal good, but even to their present contentment and joy. They would find pleasure even in their greatest mortifications and crosses, by considering the love with which God sends them, and the great benefit that their spirit reaps by them. What contentment can be greater to any soul than to become a true inward friend of God, chained unto Him with a love, the like whereto never was between any mortal creatures? to know and even feel that she belongs to God, and that God is continually watchful over her, and careful of her salvation? None of which comforts tepid souls can hope to taste; but, on the contrary, are not only continually tortured with present discontents, but much more with a fear and horror, considering their doubtfulness about their future state.

5. If such tepid souls be ignorant of the internal ways of the spirit (which without some fault of their own they scarce can be), when they come to die, it

is not conceivable what apprehensions and horrors they will feel; considering that a settled willful affection to venial sins brings a soul to an imminent danger of a frequent incurring actual mortal sins, the which, though they be not of the greater kind of enormous sins, yet they may be no less dangerous, because less corrigible, such as are those spiritual sins of pride, murmuring, factiousness, envy, ambition, &c.; besides which, how is it possible for them to give an account of sins of omission, of the want of perfecting their souls by prayer, &c., of the avoiding of which they never took any care, although their profession and vows obliged them thereto?

6. Again, if tepidity (though not in so high a degree) be found in souls that are acquainted speculatively with the internal ways of the spirit, and their obligation to pursue them in order to perfection, but either for want of courage dare not apply themselves seriously to them, or do it very faintly, coldly, or with frequent interruptions, and only are not resolved to relinquish and abjure such ways, such as though they have not a willful affection to venial sins, yet are for the most part willfully negligent in resisting them,—such souls ought to consider that their case in all respects approaches near to the miserable condition of the former, and they will have guilt enough to take away all comfort almost in a religious state, and to give them just apprehensions for the future life, of which they have no security.

7. For when such souls approach near unto death, they will then too late consider that for want of diligent prayer there may be, yea, assuredly are in them, a world of inordinations, impurities, and defects undiscovered by them, and therefore can neither be acknowledged nor bewailed; so that they cannot have any assurance of the state and inclinations of their souls; besides, they know themselves to have been guilty of a life spent in an uninterrupted ingratitude to God, who gave them light to see the ways to perfection which their profession obliged them to walk in, and yet willfully they neglected to make use of such light, or to make progress in those ways, &c. (and this is an aggravation of guilt beyond the former); they are conscious likewise of an unexcusable and long-continued unfaithfulness, never almost complying with the divine inspirations which daily urged them to put themselves resolutely into

that only secure way of an internal life, nor ever vigorously resisting the sins and imperfections which they did discover in themselves, &c. Such sad thoughts as these pressing (as usually they do) one upon another near the approaches of death, what grievous apprehensions, what terrible uncertainties must they needs cause in tepid souls, then most sensible of dangers and fears! so that their lives will be full of anguish and continual remorse, and their deaths very uncomfortable.

8. Lastly, to all these miseries of a tepid life, this also may be added as an increase of the guilt, and consequently an aggravation of the dangerous state of souls infected with that poison, which is, that they do not only themselves most ungratefully withdraw their own affections from God and divine things, but by their ill example, by misspending the time in vain extroverted conversations, by discountenancing those that are fervourous in internal ways, &c., they infect their companions, and so treacherously defraud Almighty God of the affections of others also. So that a tepid religious person, though given to no enormous excesses, is oft more harmful in a community than an open, scandalous liver; because none that hath any care of himself but will beware of such an one as this latter is; whereas a tepid soul unperceivably instills into others the poisonous infection wherewith herself is tainted.

9. From the grounds and considerations here mentioned, it doth appear how necessary it is for a devout soul, both in the beginning and pursuance of a contemplative life, to excite and fortify her courageous resolution not to be daunted by discouragements either from within or without, but at what price soever, and with what labours and sufferings soever, with fervour to persevere in the exercises and duties belonging thereto, accounting tepidity and spiritual sloth as the very bane of her whole design, the which, if it be yielded unto, though but a little, it will gather more force, and at last grow irresistible.

10. But withal she is to be advised that such her courage and fervour must be exercised, not impetuously out of passion, or such impulses as a fit of sensible devotion will sometimes produce in her; but this fervour and resolution must chiefly be seated in the superior will, and regulated by spiritual discretion, according to her present forces, both natural and supernatural, and the measure

of grace bestowed on her, and no further; for there may be as much harm by outrunning grace, as by neglecting to correspond unto it. Hence, it oft comes to pass, that many well-minded souls, being either pushed forward by an indiscreet passionate zeal, or advised by unexperienced directors to undertake unnecessarily and voluntarily either rigorous mortifications or excessive tasks of devotions, and wanting strength to continue them, have become able to do nothing at all; so that affecting too hastily to attain unto perfection sooner than God did enable them thereto, they so overburden themselves that they are forced to give over quite all tendence to it. Therefore we must be contented to proceed in such a pace as may be lasting, and that will suffice.

The Parable of a Pilgrim

A confirmation of what hath been said, particularly of the necessity of a strong resolution and courage to persevere, shown by the parable of a pilgrim travelling to Jerusalem, out of Scala Perfectionis.

1. Now, for a further confirmation and more effectual recommendation of what hath hitherto been delivered touching the nature of a contemplative life in general, the supereminent nobleness of its end, the great difficulties to be expected in it, and the absolute necessity of a firm courage to persevere and continually to make progress in it, whatsoever it costs us (without which resolution it is in vain to set one step forward in these ways), I will here annex a passage extracted out of that excellent treatise called *Scala Perfectionis*¹, written by that eminent contemplative, Dr. Walter Hilton, a Carthusian monk, in which, under the parable of a devout pilgrim desirous to travel to Jerusalem (which he interprets the vision of peace or contemplation), he delivers instructions very proper and efficacious touching the behaviour requisite in a devout soul for such a journey; the true sense of which advices I will take liberty so to deliver briefly as, notwithstanding, not to omit any important matter there more largely, and according to the old fashion, expressed.

1. *Scala Perfect.* par. 2, cap. 21, 22, 23. [A new edition of this most excellent spiritual work has been lately brought out by Father Ephrem Guy, O.S.B. Richardson, London and Derby.—J. N. S.]

2. "There was a man," saith he, "that had a great desire to go to Jerusalem; and because he knew not the right way, he addressed himself for advice to one that he hoped was not unskillful in it, and asked him whether there was any way passable thither. The other answered, that the way thither was both long and full of very great difficulties; yea, that there were many ways that seemed and promised to lead thither, but the dangers of them were too great. Nevertheless, one way he knew which, if he would diligently pursue according to the directions and marks that he would give him,—though, said he, I cannot promise thee a security from many frights, beatings, and other ill-usage and temptations of all kinds; but if thou canst have courage and patience enough to suffer them without quarrelling, or resisting, or troubling thyself, and so pass on, having this only in thy mind, and sometimes on thy tongue, *I have nought, I am nought, I desire nought but to be at Jerusalem*,—my life for thine, thou wilt escape safe with thy life and in a competent time arrive thither.

3. "The pilgrim, overjoyed with these news, answered: So I may have my life safe, and may at last come to the place that I above all things only desire, I care not what miseries I suffer in the way. Therefore let me know only what course I am to take, and, God willing, I will not fail to observe carefully your directions. The guide replied: Since thou hast so good a will, though I myself never was so happy as to be in Jerusalem, notwithstanding, be confident that by the instructions that I shall give thee, if thou wilt follow them, thou shalt come safe to thy journey's end.

4. "Now the advice that I am to give thee in brief is this: Before thou set the first step into the highway that leads thither, thou must be firmly grounded in the true Catholic faith; moreover, whatsoever sins thou findest in thy conscience, thou must seek to purge them away by hearty penance and absolution, according to the laws of the Church. This being done, begin thy journey in God's name, but be sure to go furnished with two necessary instruments, humility and charity, both which are contained in the forementioned speech, which must always be ready in thy mind: *I am nought, I have nought, I desire but only one thing, and that is our Lord Jesus, and to be with him in peace at Jerusalem*. The meaning and virtue of these words therefore thou must have