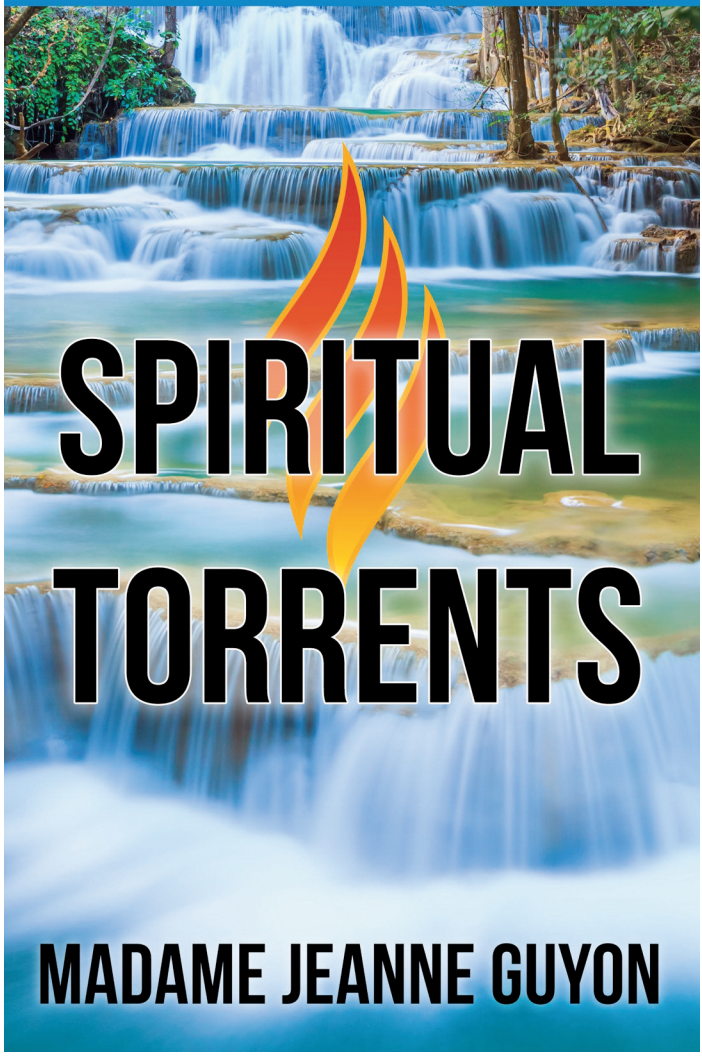
SPIRIT LIFE CLASSICS



SPIRITUAL TORRENTS

MADAME JEANNE GUYON

SPIRITUAL TORRENTS



MADAM GUYON
DAVID LEE MARTIN



Spirit Life Bible School/PureRead Ltd

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"If my people, which are called by my name,
shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face,
and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear
from heaven, and will forgive their sin,
and will heal their land."
— 2 CHRONICLES 7:14

If My People...



"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

— 2 CHRONICLES 7:14

Introduction



BY DAVID LEE MARTIN

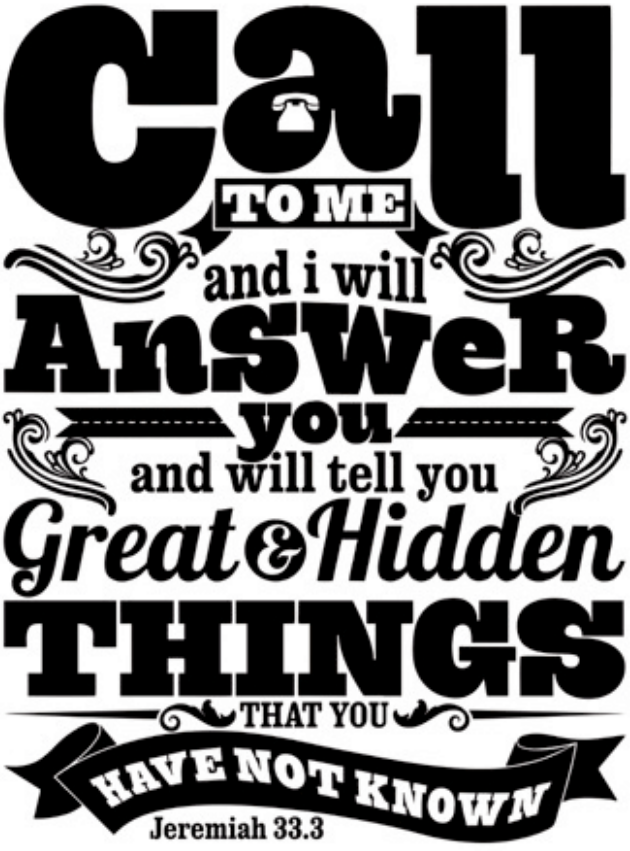
A prolific writer, and one whose words have spoken generation to generation, Andrew Murray continues to call men and women to a deeper and more abiding walk with Christ.

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David Lee Martin


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TO ME
and i will
AnSWeR
you
and will tell you
Great & Hidden
THINGS
THAT YOU
HAVE NOT KNOWN
Jeremiah 33.3

Souls Under Divine Influence are Impelled to Seek after God, but in Different Ways – Reduced to Three, and Explained by a Similitude



Souls Under Divine Influence are Impelled to Seek after God, but in Different Ways – Reduced to Three, and Explained by a Similitude

AS soon as a soul is brought under divine influence, and its return to God is true and sincere, after the first cleansing which confession and contrition have effected, God imparts to it a certain instinct to return to Him in a most complete manner, and to become united to Him. The soul feels then that it was not created for the amusements and trifles of the world, but that it has a centre and an end, to which it must be its aim to return, and out of which it can never find true repose.

This instinct is very deeply implanted in the soul, more or less in different cases, according to the designs of God; but all have a loving impatience to purify themselves, and to adopt the necessary ways and means of returning to their source and origin, like rivers, which, after leaving their source, flow on continuously, in order to precipitate themselves into the sea. You will observe that some rivers move gravely and slowly, and others with greater velocity; but there are rivers and *torrents* which rush with frightful impetuosity, and which nothing can arrest. All the burdens which might be laid upon them, and the obstructions which might be placed to impede their course, would only serve to redouble their violence. It is thus with souls. Some go on quietly towards perfection, and never reach the sea, or only very late, contented to lose themselves in some stronger and more rapid river, which carries them with itself into the sea. Others, which form the second class, flow on more vigorously and promptly than the first. They even carry with them a number of rivulets; but they are slow and idle in comparison with the last class, which rush onward with so much impetuosity, that they are utterly useless: they are not available for navigation, nor can any merchandise be trusted upon them, except at certain parts and at certain times. These are bold and mad rivers, which

dash against the rocks, which terrify by their noise, and which stop at nothing. The second class are more agreeable and more useful; their gravity is pleasing, they are all laden with merchandise, and we sail upon them without fear or peril.

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

Of The First Way, Which is Active and Meditative



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

As their source is not abundant, the dryness sometimes causes delay. There are even periods, in times of aridity, when they dry up altogether. They do not cease to flow from the source, but it is so feebly as to be barely perceptible. These rivers carry little or no merchandise, and, therefore, for the public need, it must be taken to them. It is necessary, at the same time, that art

should assist nature, and find the means of enlarging them, either by canals, or by the help of other rivers of the same kind, which are joined together and united to it, which rivers thus joined increase the body of water, and, helping each other, put themselves in a condition to carry a few small boats, not to the sea, but to some of the chief rivers, of which we shall speak later. Such beings have usually little depth of spiritual life. They work outwardly, and rarely quit their meditations, so that they are not fit for great things. In general they carry no merchandise —that is to say, they can impart nothing to others; and God seldom uses them, unless it be to carry a few little boats—that is, to minister to bodily necessities; and in order to be used, they must be discharged into the canals of sensible graces, or united to some others in religion, by which means several, of medium grace, manage to carry the small boat, but not into the sea itself, which is God: into that they never enter in this life, but only in the next.

It is not that souls are not sanctified in this way. There are many people, who pass for being very virtuous, who never get beyond it, God giving them lights conformed to their condition, which are sometimes very beautiful, and are the admiration of the religious world. The most highly favoured of this class are diligent in the practice of virtue; they devise

thousands of holy inventions and practices to lead them to God, and to enable them to abide in His presence; but all is accomplished by their own efforts, aided and supported by grace, and their own works appear to exceed the work of God, His work only concurring with theirs.

The spiritual life of this class only thrives in proportion to their work. If this work be removed, the progress of grace within them is arrested: they resemble pumps, which only yield water in proportion as they are agitated. You will observe in them a great tendency to assist themselves by means of their natural sensibilities, a vigorous activity, a desire to be always doing something more and something new to promote their perfection, and, in their seasons of barrenness, an anxiety to rid themselves of it. They are subject to great variation: sometimes they do wonders, at other times they languish and decline. They have no evenness of conduct, because, as the greater part of their religion is in these natural sensibilities, whenever it happens that their sensibilities are dry, either from want of work on their part, or from a lack of correspondence on the part of God, they fall into discouragement, or else they redouble their efforts, in the hope of recovering of themselves what they have lost. They never possess, like others, a profound peace or

calmness in the midst of distractions; on the contrary, they are always on the alert to struggle against them or to complain of them.

Such minds must not be directed to passive devotion; this would be to ruin them irrecoverably, taking from them their means of access to God. For as with a person who is compelled to travel, and who has neither boat nor carriage, nor any other alternative than that of going on foot, if you remove his feet, you place advancement beyond his reach; so with these souls; if you take away their works, which are their feet, they can never advance.

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

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

This may be known in some by the opposition they have to remaining at rest, and allowing themselves to be led by the Spirit of God; by a confusion of faults

and defects into which they fall without being conscious of them; or, if they are possessed of natural prudence, by a certain skill in concealing their faults from others and from themselves; by their adherence to their sentiments, and by a number of other indications which cannot be explained.

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

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

experience. Perfection goes on with a steady advancement corresponding to the progress of the inner life.

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

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

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

It seems to me that we must act in the divine life as in a school. The scholars are not kept always in the

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

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

their light, who expatiate upon the preparation and the methods for prayer, will make but little advance in it; and after ten or twenty years of this exercise, will always remain the same.

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

Of the Second Way, which is the Passive Way of Light



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

their generation; and numbers of saints who shine as stars in the Church have never passed this limit. This class is composed of two kinds. The first commenced in the ordinary way, and have afterwards been drawn to passive contemplation. The others have been, as it were, taken by surprise; they have been seized by the heart, and they feel themselves loving without having learned to know the object of their love. For there is this difference between divine and human love, that the latter supposes a previous acquaintance with its object, because, as it is outside of it, the senses must be taken to it, and the senses can only be taken to it because it is communicated to them: the eyes see and the heart loves. It is not so with divine love. God, having an absolute power over the heart of man, and being its origin and its end, it is not necessary that He should make known to it what He is. He takes it by assault, without giving it battle. The heart is powerless to resist Him, even though He may not use an absolute and violent authority, unless it be in some cases where He permits it to be so, in order to manifest His power. He takes hearts, then, in this way, making them burn in a moment; but usually He gives them flashes of light which dazzle them, and lift them nearer to Himself. These persons appear much greater than those of whom I shall speak later, to those who are not possessed of a divine discernment,

for they attain outwardly to a high degree of perfection, God eminently elevating their natural capacity, and replenishing it in an extraordinary manner; and yet they are never really brought to a state of annihilation to self, and God does not usually so draw them out of their own being that they become lost in Himself. Such characters as these are, however, the wonder and admiration of men. God bestows on them gifts upon gifts, graces upon graces, visions, revelations, inward voices, ecstasies, ravishments, &c. It seems as though God's only care was to enrich and beautify them, and to communicate to them His secrets. All joys are theirs.

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

thus stopping at the gifts, instead of being led through them to the Giver.

The design of God in the bestowal of His grace, and in the profusion with which He gives it, is to bring them nearer to Himself; but they make use of it for an utterly different end: they rest in it, reflect upon it, look at it, and appropriate it; and hence arise vanity, complaisance, self-esteem, the preference of themselves to others, and often the destruction of religious life. These people are admirable, in themselves considered; and sometimes by a special grace they are made very helpful to others, particularly if they have been brought from great depths of sin. But usually they are less fitted to lead others than those who come after; for being near to God themselves, they have a horror of sin, and often a shrinking from sinners, and never having experienced the miseries they see in others, they are astonished, and unable to render either help or advice. They expect too great perfection, and do not lead on to it little by little, and if they meet with weak ones, they do not aid them in proportion to their own advancement, or in accordance with God's designs, but often even seek to avoid them. They find it difficult to converse with those who have not reached their own level, preferring a solitary life to all the ministry of love. If such persons were heard in

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

This class of people find far greater difficulty in entering the way of faith than the first, for as what

they already possess is so great, and so evidently from God, they will not believe that there is anything higher in the Church of God. Therefore they cling to it.

O God! how many spiritual possessions there are which appear great virtues to those who are not divinely enlightened, and which appear great and dangerous defects to those who are so! For those in this way regard as virtues what others look upon as subtle faults; and even the light to see them in their true colours is not given to them. These people have rules and regulations for their obedience, which are marked by prudence; they are strong and vigorous, though they appear dead. They are indeed dead as to their own wants, but not as to their foundation. Such souls as these often possess an inner silence, certain sinkings into God, which they distinguish and express well; but they have not that secret longing to be nothing, like the last class. It is true they desire to be nothing by a certain perceptible annihilation, a deep humility, an abasement under the immense weight of God's greatness. All this is an annihilation in which they dwell without being annihilated. They have the feeling of annihilation without the reality, for the soul is still sustained by its feelings, and this state is more satisfactory to it than any other, for it gives more assurance. This class usually are only

brought into God by death, unless it be some privileged ones, whom God designs to be the lights of His Church, or whom He designs to sanctify more eminently; and such He robs by degrees of all their riches. But as there are few sufficiently courageous to be willing, after so much blessedness, to lose it all, few pass this point, God's intention perhaps being that they should not pass it, and that, as in the Father's house there are many mansions, they should only occupy this one. Let us leave the causes with God.

Of the Third Way, which is the Passive Way of Faith, and of its First Degree



WHAT shall we say of the souls in this *third way*, unless it be that they resemble TORRENTS which rise in high mountains? They have their source in God Himself, and they have not a moment's rest until they are lost in Him. Nothing stops them, and no burdens are laid upon them. They rush on with a rapidity which alarms even the most confident. These torrents flow without order, here and there, wherever they can find a passage, having neither regular beds nor an orderly course. They sometimes become muddy by passing through ground which is not firm, and which they bear away with them by their rapidity. Sometimes they appear to be irrecoverably lost, then they reappear for a time, but it is only to precipitate themselves in another abyss, still deeper than the

former one. It is the sport of these torrents to show themselves, to lose themselves, and to break themselves upon the rocks. Their course is so rapid as to be undiscernible; but finally, after many precipices and abysses, after having been dashed against rocks, and many times lost and found again, they reach the sea, where they are lost to be found no more. And there, however poor, mean, useless, destitute of merchandise the poor torrent may have been, it is wonderfully enriched, for it is not rich with its own riches, like other rivers, which only bear a certain amount of merchandise or certain rarities, but it is rich with the riches of the sea itself. It bears on its bosom the largest vessels; it is the sea which bears them, and yet it is the river, because the river, being lost in the sea, has become one with it.

It is to be remarked, that the river or torrent thus precipitated into the sea does not lose its nature, although it is so changed and lost as not to be recognised. It will always remain what it was, yet its identity is lost, not as to reality, but as to quality; for it so takes the properties of salt water, that it has nothing peculiar to itself, and the more it loses itself and remains in the sea, the more it exchanges its own nature for that of the sea. For what, then, is not this

poor torrent fitted? Its capacity is unlimited, since it is the same as that of the sea; it is capable of enriching the whole earth. O happy loss! who can set thee forth? Who can describe the gain which has been made by this useless and good-for-nothing river, despised and looked upon as a mad thing, on which the smallest boat could not be trusted, because, not being able to restrain itself, it would have dragged the boat with it. What do you say of the fate of this torrent, O great rivers! which flow with such majesty, which are the delight and admiration of the world, and glory in the quantity of merchandise spread out upon you? The fate of this poor torrent, which you regard with contempt, or at best with compassion, what has it become? What use can it serve now, or rather, what use can it not serve? What does it lack? You are now its servants, since the riches which you possess are only the overflow of its abundance, or a fresh supply which you are carrying to it.

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

The soul, as we have said, having proceeded from God, has a continual propensity to return to Him, because, as He is its origin, He is also its final end. Its

course would be interminable if it were not arrested or interrupted by sin and unbelief. Therefore the heart of man is perpetually in motion, and can find no rest till it returns to its origin and its centre, which is God: like fire, which, being removed from its sphere, is in continual agitation, and does not rest till it has returned to it, and then, by a miracle of nature, this element, so active itself as to consume everything by its activity, is at perfect rest. O poor soul who are seeking happiness in this life! you will never find it out of God. Seek to return to Him: there all your longings and troubles, your agitations and anxieties, will be reduced to perfect rest.

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

The hindrances, then, arise from sins and imperfections, which arrest for a time the course of the soul, more or less, according to the magnitude of the fault. Then the soul is conscious of its activity, as though when fire was going on towards its centre, it encountered obstacles, such as pieces of wood or straw: it would resume its former activity in order to consume these obstacles or barriers, and the greater the obstacle the more its activity would increase. If it were a piece of wood, a longer and stronger activity would be needed to consume it; but if it were only a straw, it would be burned up in a moment, and would but very slightly impede its course. You will notice that the obstacles which the fire would encounter would only impart to it a fresh stimulus to surmount all which prevented its union with its centre; again, it is to be remarked, that the more obstacles the fire might encounter, and the more considerable they might be, the more they would retard its course; and if it were continually meeting with fresh ones, it would be kept back, and prevented from returning whence it came. We know by experience, that if we continually add fuel to fire, we shall keep it down, and prevent its rising. It is the same with the souls of men. Their instincts and natural propensities lead them towards God. They would advance incessantly, were it not for the hindrances they meet. These

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

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

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

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

certain rest which it sees from afar, but which only redoubles its anxiety, and increases its desire to pursue it until it finds it.

Some of those who are thus exercised, having never been taught that they must seek to have God within them, and not expect to find Him in outward righteousness, give themselves up to meditation, and seek without what can only be found within. This meditation, in which they seldom succeed, because God, who has better things in store for them, does not permit them to find any rest in such an experience, only serves to increase their longing; for their wound is at the heart, and they apply the plaster externally, which does but foster the disease, instead of healing it. They struggle a long time with this exercise, and their struggling does but increase their powerlessness; and unless God, who Himself assumes the charge of them, sends some messenger to show them a different way, they will lose their time, and will lose it just so long as they remain unaided. But God, who is abundant in goodness, does not fail to send them help, though it may be but passing and temporary. As soon, then, as they are taught that they cannot advance because their wound is an internal one, and they are seeking to heal it by external applications; when they are led to seek in the depths of their own hearts what they have sought in vain out

of themselves; then they find, with an astonishment which overwhelms them, that they have within them a treasure which they have been seeking far off. Then they rejoice in their new liberty; they marvel that prayer is no longer a burden, and that the more they retire within themselves, the more they taste of a certain mysterious something which ravishes them and carries them away, and they would wish ever to love thus, and thus to be buried within themselves. Yet what they experience, delightful as it may appear, does not stop them, if they are to be led into pure faith, but leads them to follow after something more, which they have not yet known. They are now all ardour and love. They seem already to be in Paradise; for what they possess within themselves is infinitely sweeter than all the joys of earth: these they can leave without pain; they would leave the whole world to enjoy for one hour their present experience. They find that prayer has become their continual attitude; their love increases day by day, so that their one desire is always to love and never to be interrupted. And as they are not now strong enough to be undisturbed by conversation, they shun and fear it; they love to be alone, and to enjoy the caresses of their Beloved. They have within themselves a Counsellor, who lets them find no pleasure in earthly things, and who does not suffer them to commit a

single fault, without making them feel by His coldness how much sin is displeasing to Him. This coldness of God, in times of transgression, is to them the most terrible chastisement. It seems as though God's only care were to correct and reprove them, and His one purpose to perfect them. It is a surprise to themselves and to others that they change more in a month by this way, and even in a day, than in several years by the other. O God! it belongs only to Thee to correct and to purify the hearts of Thy children!

God has yet another means of chastising the soul, when it is further advanced in the divine life, by making Himself more fully known to it after it falls; then the poor soul is covered with confusion; it would rather bear the most severe chastisement than this goodness of God after it has sinned.

These persons are now so full of their own feelings that they want to impart them to others; they long to teach the whole world to love God; their sentiments towards Him are so deep, so pure, and so disinterested, that those who hear them speak, if they are not divinely enlightened, believe them to have attained the height of perfection. They are fruitful in good works; there is no reasoning here, nothing but a deep and burning love. The soul feels itself seized and held fast by a divine force which ravishes and

consumes it. It is like intoxicated persons, who are so possessed with wine that they do not know what they are doing, and are no longer masters of themselves. If such as these try to read, the book falls from their hands, and a single line suffices them; they can hardly get through a page in a whole day, however assiduously they may devote themselves to it, for a single word from God awakens that secret instinct which animates and fires them, so that love closes both their mouth and their eyes. They cannot utter verbal prayers, being unable to pronounce them. A heart which is unaccustomed to this does not know what it means; for it has never experienced anything like it before, and it does not understand why it cannot pray, and yet it cannot resist the power which overcomes it. It cannot be troubled, nor be fearful of doing wrong, for He who holds it bound does not permit it either to doubt that it is He who thus holds it, or to strive against it, for if it makes an effort to pray, it feels that He who possesses it closes its lips, and compels it, by a sweet and loving violence, to be silent. Not that the creature cannot resist and speak by an effort, but besides doing violence to himself he loses this divine peace, and feels that he is becoming dry: he must allow himself to be moved upon by God at His will, and not in his own way. The soul in this state imagines itself to be in an inward silence,

because its working is so gentle, so easy, and so quiet that it does not perceive it. It believes itself to have reached the summit of perfection, and it sees nothing before it but enjoyment of the wealth it possesses.

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

Imperfections of this First Degree



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

The faults of those in this degree are a certain self-esteem, more hidden and deeply rooted than it was before they had received these graces and favours from God; a certain secret contempt for others whom they see so far behind themselves, and a certain hardness for sin and sinners; a zeal of St John

before the descent of the Holy Ghost, when he wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans to consume them; a certain confidence in their own safety and virtue; a secret pride, which causes them to grieve specially over the faults which they commit in public: they appropriate the gifts of God, and treat them as though they were their own: they forget weakness and poverty in the strength which they possess; so that they lose all self-distrust. Though all this and much more is to be found in persons in this degree, they are themselves unconscious of it; but these faults will make themselves known in time. The grace which they feel so strongly in themselves being an assurance to them that they have nothing to fear, they allow themselves to speak without being divinely commissioned. They are anxious to communicate what they feel to every one else. It is true that they are of use to others, for their burning words take hold of the hearts of those who hear them; but apart from the fact that they cannot do the good they would do, if God would have them impart to others what they have received, they are giving out of their necessity and not of their abundance; so that they exhaust themselves; as you have seen several pools of water under a fountain. The fountain alone gives out of its abundance, and the pools only send into each other of the fulness

which is communicated to them; but if the fountain be closed or turned aside, and the pools cease to overflow, then as they are cut off from the source, they dry up. This is precisely what happens to those in this degree. They want to be constantly sending out their waters, and it is not till late that they perceive that the water which they had was only for themselves, and that they are not in a state to communicate it, because they are not connected with the source. They are like bottles of scent which are left open: they find so much sweetness in the odour which they emit that they do not perceive the loss they themselves sustain. Yet they appear to practise virtue without any effort, since they are occupied only with a general love, without reason or motive. If you ask them what they do during the day, they will tell you that they love; but if you ask why they love, they will tell you that they do not know; they only know that they love, and that they burn with desire to suffer for the object of their love. You may ask if it is not the sight of the sufferings of their Beloved which inspires them with the longing to suffer with Him, but they will reply that the thought of His sufferings did not even enter their mind. Neither is it the desire to imitate the virtues which they see in Him, for they do not think of them, nor the sight of His beauty which enraptures them, for they do not

look at it. Only they feel in the depths of their heart a deep wound, yet so delightful that they rest in their pain, and find their pleasure in their grief.

They believe now that they have arrived at the consummation of all, for though they are full of the faults I have mentioned, and many others yet more dangerous, which are better perceived in the following degree than in this, they rest in their fancied perfection, and stopping at the means, which they mistake for the end, they would remain stationary, if God did not bring the torrent, which is now like a peaceful lake on a mountain-top, to the brow of the hill in order to precipitate it, and to start it on a course which will be more or less rapid according to the depth of its fall.

It appears to me that even the most advanced in this degree have a habit of concealing their faults, both from themselves and others, always finding excuses and extenuations; not designedly, but from a certain love of their own excellence, and a habitual dissimulation under which they hide themselves. The faults which cause them the deepest solicitude are those which are most apparent to others. They have a

hidden love of self, stronger than ever, an esteem for their own position, a secret desire to attract attention, an affected modesty, a facility in judging others, and a preference for private devotion rather than domestic duties, which renders them the cause of many of the sins of those around them. This is of great importance. The soul, feeling itself drawn so strongly and sweetly, desires to be always alone and in prayer, which gives rise to two evils—the first, that in its seasons of greatest liberty it spends too much time in solitude; the second, that when its vigour of love is exhausted, as it often is in this way, it has not the same strength in times of dryness; it finds it difficult to remain so long in prayer; it readily shortens the time; its thoughts wander to exterior objects; then it is discouraged and cast down, thinking that all is lost, and does everything in its power to restore itself to the presence and favour of God.

But if such persons were strong enough to live an even life, and not to seek to do more in seasons of abundance than in times of barrenness, they would satisfy every one. As it is, they are troublesome to those around them, to whom they cannot condescend, making it a favour to lay themselves out for the satisfaction of others: they preserve an austere silence when it is unnecessary, and at other times talk incessantly of the things of God. A wife

has scruples about pleasing her husband, entertaining him, walking with him, or seeking to amuse him, but has none about speaking uselessly for two hours with religious devotees. This is a horrible abuse. We ought to be diligent in the discharge of all duties, whatever their nature may be; and even if they do cause us inconvenience, we shall yet find great profit in doing this, not perhaps in the way we imagine, but in hastening the crucifixion of self. It even seems as though our Lord shows that such sacrifice is pleasing to Him by the grace which He sheds upon it. I knew a lady who, when playing at cards with her husband in order to please him, experienced such deep and intimate communion with God as she never felt in prayer, and it was the same with everything she did at her husband's desire; but if she neglected these things for others which she thought better, she was conscious that she was not walking in the will of God. This did not prevent her often committing faults, because the attractions of meditation and the happiness of devotion, which are preferred to these apparent losses of time, insensibly draw the soul away, and lead it to change its course, and this by most people is looked upon as sanctity. However, those who are to be taught the way of faith are not suffered long to remain in these errors, because, as God designs to lead them on to better things, He makes

them conscious of their deficiency. It often happens, too, that persons by means of this death to self, and acting contrary to their natural inclinations, feel themselves more strongly drawn to their inward rest; for it is natural to man to desire most strongly what it is most difficult for him to obtain, and to desire most intensely those things which he most earnestly resolves to avoid. This difficulty of being able to enjoy only a partial rest increases the rest, and causes them even in activity to feel themselves acted upon so powerfully that they seem to have two souls within them, the inner one being infinitely stronger than the outer. But if they leave their duties in order to give the time to devotion, they will find it an empty form, and all its joy will be lost. By devotion I do not mean compulsory prayer, which is gone through as a duty that must not be avoided; neither do I understand by activity the labours of their own choice, but those which come within the range of positive duty. If they have spare time at their disposal, by all means let them spend it in prayer; nor must they lay upon themselves unnecessary burdens, and call them obligations. When the taste for meditation is very great, the soul does not usually fall into these last-named errors, but rather into the former one, that of courting retirement. I knew a person who spent more time in prayer when it was painful to her than when

she felt it a delight, struggling with the disinclination; but this is injurious to the health, because of the violence which it does to the senses and the understanding, which being unable to concentrate themselves upon any one object, and being deprived of the sweet communion which formerly held them in subjection to God, endure such torment, that the subject of it would rather suffer the greatest trial than the violence which is necessary to enable it to fix its thoughts on God. The person to whom I alluded sometimes passed two or three hours successively in this painful devotion, and she has assured me that the strangest austerities would have been delightful to her in comparison with the time thus spent. But as a violence so strong as this in subjects so weak is calculated to ruin both body and mind, I think it is better not in any way to regulate the time spent in prayer by our varying emotions. This painful dryness of which I have spoken belongs only to the first degree of faith, and is often the effect of exhaustion; and yet those who have passed through it imagine themselves dead, and write and speak of it as the most sorrowful part of the spiritual life. It is true they have not known the contrary experience, and often they have not the courage to pass through this, for in this sorrow the soul is deserted by God, who withdraws from it His sensible helps, but it is

nevertheless caused by the senses, because, being accustomed to see and to feel, and never having experienced a similar privation, they are in despair, which however is not of long duration, for the forces of the soul are not then in a state to bear for long such a pressure; it will either go back to seek for spiritual food, or else it will give all up. This is why the Lord does not fail to return: sometimes He does not even suffer the prayer to cease before He reappears; and if He does not return during the hour of prayer, He comes in a more manifest way during the day.

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

Hitherto it has only been a play of love, to which the soul would easily become accustomed if her Beloved

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

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

not to cease following after Him; and if by unfaithfulness or surprise we stop for a moment, to redouble our speed, without fearing or contemplating the precipices, although we fall a thousand times, till we are so weary that we lose our strength, and die from continual fatigue; when, perhaps, if our Beloved turns and looks upon us, His glance restores life by the exquisite pleasure it gives; until at last He becomes so cruel that He lets us die for want of help: all this, I say, belongs not to this state, but to that which follows. I must remark here, that the degree of which I have been speaking is of very long duration, at least unless God intends the soul to make great advances; and many, as I have said, never pass it.

Second Degree of the Passive Way of Faith



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

You will remember I remarked before of this soul,

that as soon as God imparted to it the gift of *passive* faith, He gave it at the same time an instinct to seek after Him as its centre; but in its unfaithfulness it stifles by its repose this instinct to seek God, and would remain stationary, if God did not revive this instinct by bringing it to the edge of the mountain, whence it is compelled to precipitate itself. At first it is sensible that it has lost that calmness which it expected to retain for ever. Its waters, formerly so tranquil, begin to be noisy. A tumult is seen in its waves; they run and dash over. But where do they run? Alas! as they imagine, it is to their own destruction. If it were in their power to desire anything, they would wish to restrain themselves, and return to their former calm. But this is impossible. The declivity is found; they must be precipitated from slope to slope. It is no longer a question of abyss or of loss. The water, that is the soul, always reappears, and is never lost in this degree. It is embroiled and precipitated; one wave follows another, and the other takes it up and crashes it by its precipitation. Yet this water finds on the slope of the mountain certain flat places where it takes a little relaxation. It delights in the clearness of its waters; and it sees that its falls, its course, this breaking of its waves upon the rocks, have served to render it more pure. It finds itself delivered from its

noise and storms, and thinks it has now found its resting-place; and it believes this the more readily because it cannot doubt that the state through which it has just passed has greatly purified it, for it sees that its waters are clearer, and it no longer perceives the disagreeable odour which certain stagnant parts had given to it on the top of the mountain; it has even acquired a certain insight into its own condition; it has seen by the troubled state of its passions (the waves) that they were not lost, but only asleep. As when it was descending the mountain, on its way to this level, it thought it was losing its way, and had no hope of recovering its lost peace, so now that it no longer hears the dash of its waves, that it finds itself flowing calmly and pleasantly along the sand, it forgets its former trouble, and never imagines there will be a return of it: it sees that it has acquired fresh purity, and does not fear that it will again become soiled; for here it is not stagnant, but flows as gently and brightly as possible. Ah, poor torrent! You think you have found your resting-place, and are firmly established in it! You begin to delight in your waters. The swans glide upon them, and rejoice in their beauty. But what is your surprise while, as you are flowing along so happily, you suddenly encounter a steeper slope, longer and more dangerous than the first! Then the torrent recommences its tumult.

Formerly it was only a moderate noise; now it is insupportable. It descends with a crash and a roar greater than ever. It can hardly be said to have a bed, for it falls from rock to rock, and dashes down without order or reason; it alarms every one by its noise; all fear to approach it. Ah, poor torrent! what will you do? You drag away in your fury all that comes in your way; you feel nothing but the declivity down which you are hurried, and you think you are lost. Nay, do not fear; you are not lost, but the time of your happiness is not yet come. There must be many more disturbances and losses before then; you have but just commenced your course.

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

remaining in its present position, it comes to the slope of the mountain. It begins, to its amazement, to be sensible of an inclination for the things it had given up. It sees its deep calm suddenly disturbed; distractions come in crowds, one upon another; the soul finds only stones in its path, dryness and aridity. A feeling of distaste comes into prayer. Its passions, which it thought were dead, but which were only asleep, all revive.

It is completely astonished at this change. It would like either to return to the top of the mountain, or at least to remain where it is; but this cannot be. The declivity is found, and the soul must fall (not into sin, but into a privation of the previous degree and of feeling). It does its best to rise after it falls; it does all in its power to restrain itself, and to cling to some devotional exercise; it makes an effort to recover its former peace; it seeks solitude in the hope of recovering it. But its labour is in vain. It resigns itself to suffer its dejection, and hates the sin which has occasioned it. It longs to put things right, but can find no means of doing it; the torrent must go on its way; it drags with it all that is opposed to it. Then, seeing that it no longer finds support in God, it seeks it in the creature; but it finds none; and its unfaithfulness only increases its apprehension. At last, the poor bride, not knowing what to do, weeping

everywhere the loss of her Beloved, is filled with astonishment when He again reveals Himself to her. At first she is charmed at the sight, as she feared she had lost Him for ever. She is all the more happy, because she finds that He has brought with Him new wealth, a new purity, a great distrust of self. She has no longer the desire to stop, as she formerly had; she goes on continuously, but peacefully and gently, and yet she has fears lest her peace should be disturbed. She trembles lest she should again lose the treasure which is all the dearer to her because she had been so sensible of its loss. She is afraid she may displease Him, and that He will leave her again. She tries to be more faithful to Him, and not to make an end of the means.

However, this repose carries away the soul, ravishes it, and renders it idle. It cannot help being sensible of its peace, and it desires to be always alone. It has again acquired a spiritual greediness. To rob it of solitude is to rob it of life. It is still more selfish than before, what it possesses being more delightful. It seems to be in a new rest. It is going along calmly, when all at once it comes to another descent, steeper and longer than the former one. It is suddenly seized with a fresh surprise; it endeavours to hold itself back, but in vain; it must fall; it must dash on from rock to rock. It is astonished to find that it has lost

its love for prayer and devotion. It does violence to itself by continuing in it. It finds only death at every step. That which formerly revived it is now the cause of its death. Its peace has gone, and has left a trouble and agitation stronger than ever, caused as much by the passions, which revive (though against its will) with the more strength as they appeared the more extinct, as by crosses, which increase outwardly, and which it has no strength to bear. It arms itself with patience; it weeps, groans, and is troubled. The Bride complains that her Beloved has forsaken her; but her complaints are unheeded. Life has become death to her. All that is good she finds difficult, but has an inclination towards evil which draws her away. But she can find no rest in the creature, having tasted of the Creator. She dashes on more vehemently; and the steeper the rocks, and the greater the obstacles which oppose her course, the more she redoubles her speed. She is like the dove from the ark, which, finding no rest for the sole of its foot, was obliged to return. But alas! what could the poor dove have done if, when it desired to re-enter the ark, Noah had not put out his hand to take it in? It could only have fluttered round about the ark, seeking rest but finding none. So this poor dove flutters round the ark till the Divine Noah, having compassion on her distress, opens the door and receives her to Himself. Oh, wonderful and

loving invention of the goodness of God! He only eludes the search of the soul to make it flee more quickly to Him. He hides Himself that He may be sought after. He apparently lets her fall, that He may have the joy of sustaining her and raising her up. Oh, strong and vigorous ones, who have never experienced these artifices of love, these apparent jealousies, these flights, lovely to the soul which has passed them, but terrible to those who experience them! You, I say, who do not know these flights of love, because you are satisfied with the abiding presence of your Beloved; or, if He hide Himself, it is for so short a time that you cannot judge of the joy of His presence by the pain of a long absence; you have never experienced your weakness, and your need of His help; but those who are thus forsaken learn to lean no longer on themselves, but only on the Beloved. His rigours have rendered His gentleness the more needful for them.

These persons often commit faults through sheer weakness, and because they are deprived of all sensible support; and these faults so fill them with shame, that, if they could, they would hide themselves from their Beloved. Alas! in the terrible confusion into which they are thrown, He gives them a glimpse of Himself. He touches them with His sceptre, like another Ahasuerus (Esther v. 2), that

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

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

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

Commencement of the Third Degree of the Passive Way of Faith

Section I.

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

GRACES, AND FAVOURS, OR ORNAMENTS—ITS NECESSITY **AND EFFECTS**.

YOU have seen dying persons who, after they have been believed to be dead, have all at once assumed a new strength, and retained it until their death; as a lamp whose oil is spent flickers in the surrounding darkness, but only to die out the more quickly: thus the soul casts out flames, which only last for a moment. It has bravely resisted death; but its oil is spent: the Sun of Righteousness has so withered it up, that it is forced to die. But does this Sun design anything else with its fierce rays, except the consumption of the soul? And the poor soul thus burned thinks that it is frozen! The truth is, that the torment it suffers prevents its recognising the nature of its pain. So long as the Sun was obscured by clouds, and gave out rays to a certain extent moderated, it felt the heat, and thought it was burning, while in reality it was but slightly warmed: but when the Sun flashed full upon it, then the soul felt itself burning, without believing that it was so much as warmed. O loving deceit! O sweet and cruel Love! Have you lovers only to deceive them thus? You wound these hearts, and then hide your darts, and make them pursue after that which has wounded

them. You attract them, and show yourself to them, and when they long to possess you, you flee from them. When you see the soul reduced to the last extremity, and out of breath from its constant pursuit, you show yourself for a moment that it may recover life, only to be killed a thousand times with ever-increasing severity.

O rigorous Lover! innocent murderer! Why dost Thou not kill with a single blow? Why give wine to an expiring heart, and restore life in order to destroy it afresh? This is Thy sport. Thou woundest to the death; and when Thou seest the victim on the point of expiring, Thou healest one wound in order to inflict another! Alas! usually we die but once; and the very cruellest murderers in times of persecution, though they prolonged life, it is true, yet were content to destroy it but once. But Thou, less compassionate than they, takest away our life time after time, and restorest it again.

O life, which cannot be lost without so many deaths! O death, which can only be attained by the loss of so many lives! Perhaps this soul, after thou hast devoured it in Thy bosom, will enjoy its Beloved. That would be too great happiness for it: it must undergo another torture. It must be *buried* and reduced to *ashes*. But perhaps it will then arrive at the

end of its sufferings, for bodies which decay suffer no longer. Oh! it is not thus with the soul: it suffers continually; and burial, decay, and nothingness are even more sensibly felt by it than death itself.

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

the gifts of God, but they do not possess God Himself in exchange.

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

off the hands with which they cling to a support, and thus obliges them to sink into the deep. Crosses become multiplied, and the more they increase, the greater is the helplessness to bear them, so that they seem as though they never could be borne. The most painful part of this condition is, that the trouble always begins by some fault in the sufferer, who believes he has brought it upon himself.

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

When those who are in this condition see others who are manifestly living in communion with God, their anguish is redoubled, and they sink in the sense of their own nothingness. They long to be able to imitate them, but finding all their efforts useless, they are compelled to die. They say in the language of Scripture, "The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me" (Job iii. 25). What! they say, to lose God, and to lose Him for ever, without the hope of ever finding Him again! To be deprived of love for time and for eternity! To be unable to love Him whom I know to be so worthy of my affection!

Oh! is it not sufficient, Divine Lover, to cast off your spouse, to turn away from her, without compelling her to lose love, and lose it, as it seems, for ever? She believes she has lost it, and yet she never loved more strongly or more purely. She has indeed lost the vigour, the sensible strength of love; but she has not lost love itself; on the contrary, she possesses it in a greater degree than ever. She cannot believe this, and yet it is easily known; for the heart cannot exist without love. If it does not love God, its affection is concentrated upon some other object: but here the bride of Christ is far from taking pleasure in anything. She regards the revolt of her passions and her involuntary faults as terrible crimes, which draw upon her the hatred of her Beloved. She seeks to cleanse and to purify herself, but she is no sooner washed than she seems to fall into a slough yet more filthy and polluted than that from which she has just escaped. She does not see that it is because she runs that she contracts defilement, and falls so frequently, yet she is so ashamed to run in this condition, that she does not know where to hide herself. Her garments are soiled; she loses all she has in the race.

Her Bridegroom aids in her spoliation for two reasons: the first, because she has soiled her beautiful garments by her vain complaisances, and has appropriated the gifts of God in reflections of self-

esteem. The second, because in running, her course will be impeded by this burden of appropriation; even the fear of losing such riches would lessen her speed.

O poor soul! what art thou become? Formerly thou wast the delight of thy Bridegroom, when He took such pleasure in adorning and beautifying thee; now thou art so naked, so ragged, so poor, that thou darest neither to look upon thyself nor to appear before Him. Those who gaze upon thee, who, after having so much admired thee, see thee now so disfigured, believe that either thou hast grown mad, or that thou hast committed some great crime, which has caused thy Beloved to abandon thee. They do not see that this jealous Husband, who desires that His bride should be His alone, seeing that she is amusing herself with her ornaments, that she delights in them, that she is in love with herself; seeing this, I say, and that she sometimes ceases looking at Him in order to look at herself, and that her love to Him is growing cold because her self-love is so strong, is stripping her, and taking away all her beauties and riches from before her eyes.

In the abundance of her wealth, she takes delight in contemplating herself: she sees good qualities in herself, which engage her affection, and alienate it from her Bridegroom. In her foolishness she does not

see that she is only fair with the beauties of her Beloved; and that if He removed these, she would be so hideous that she would be frightened at herself. More than this, she neglects to follow Him wherever He goes; she fears lest she may spoil her complexion, or lose her jewels. O jealous Love! how well is it that thou comest to chastise this proud one, and to take from her what Thou hast given, that she may learn to know herself, and that, being naked and destitute, nothing may impede her course.

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

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

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

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

first she receives His caresses with so much confusion, that she dare not lift her eyes, but forgetting her past woes in her present happiness, she loses herself in the new caresses of her Beloved, and thinking no more of her past miseries, she glories and rests in these caresses, and thereby compels the Bridegroom to be angry again, and to despoil her anew.

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

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

It will perhaps be asked, If the gifts of God are productive of such evil consequences, why are they given? God gives them, in the fulness of His

goodness, in order to draw the soul from sin, from attachment to the creature, and to bring it back to Himself. But these same gifts with which He gratifies it—that He may wean it from earth and from self to love Him, at least from gratitude—we use to excite our self-love and self-admiration, to amuse ourselves with them; and self-love is so deeply rooted in man, that it is augmented by these gifts; for he finds in himself new charms, which he had not discovered before; he delights in them, and appropriates to himself what belongs only to God. It is true, God could deliver him from it, but He does not do it, for reasons known only to Himself. The soul, thus despoiled by God, loses a little of its self-love, and begins to see that it was not so rich as it fancied, but that all its virtue was in Christ; it sees 164that it has abused His grace, and consents that He should take back His gifts. The bride says, "I shall be rich with the riches of my Bridegroom, and though He may keep them, yet, from my union in heart and will with Him, they will still be mine." She is even glad to lose these gifts of God; she finds herself unencumbered, better fitted for walking. Gradually she becomes accustomed to this spoliation; she knows it has been good for her; she is no longer grieved because of it; and, as she is so beautiful, she satisfies herself that she will not cease to please her Bridegroom by her

natural beauty and her simple garments, as much as she could with all her ornaments.

Section II.

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

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

Alas, poor bride! what wilt thou do now? This is far worse than before, for these garments are necessary to her, and it is contrary to all propriety to suffer herself to be stripped of them. Oh! it is now that she makes all the resistance in her power. She brings forward all the reasons why her Bridegroom should not thus leave her naked: she tells Him that it will bring reproach upon Himself. "Alas!" she cries, "I have lost all the virtues which Thou hast bestowed upon me, Thy gifts, the sweetness of Thy love! But still I was able to make an outward profession of virtue; I engaged in works of charity; I prayed assiduously, even though I was deprived of Thy sensible benefits: but I cannot consent to lose all this. I was still clothed according to my position, and looked upon by the world as Thy bride: but if I lose my garments, it will bring shame upon Thee." "It matters not, poor soul; thou must consent to this loss also: thou dost not yet know thyself; thou believest that thy raiment is thine own, and that thou canst use it as thou wilt. But though I acquired it at such a cost, thou hast given it back to me as if it were a recompense on thy part for the labours I have endured for Thee. Let it go; thou must lose it." The soul having done its best to keep it, lets it go, little by little, and finds itself gradually despoiled. It finds no inclination for anything; on the contrary, all is

distasteful to it. Formerly it had aversions and difficulties, without absolute powerlessness; but here all power is taken from it: its strength of body and mind fails entirely; the inclination for better things alone remains, and this is the last robe, which must finally be lost.

This is done very gradually, and the process is extremely painful, because the bride sees all the while that it has been caused by her own folly. She dares not speak, lest she may irritate the Bridegroom, whose anger is worse to her than death. She begins to know herself better, to see that she is nothing in herself, and that all belongs to her Bridegroom. She begins to distrust herself, and, little by little, she loses her self-esteem.

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

If she was confused when at the first her riches were taken from her, her confusion at the sight of her nakedness is infinitely more painful. She cannot bear

to appear before her Bridegroom, so deep is her shame. But she must remain, and run hither and thither in this state. What! is it not even permitted to her to hide herself? No; she must appear thus in public. The world begins to think less highly of her. It says, "Is this that bride who was once the admiration of angels and of men? See how she has fallen!" These words increase her confusion, because she is well aware that her Bridegroom has dealt justly with her. She does what she can to induce Him to clothe her a little, but He will do nothing, after having thus stripped her of all, for her garments would satisfy her by covering her, and would prevent her seeing herself as she is.

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

Section III.

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

All this would be but little if the bride still retained her beauty; but the Bridegroom robs her of that also. Hitherto she has been despoiled of gifts, graces, and favours (facility for good): she has lost all good works, such as outward charity, care for the poor, readiness to help others, but she has not lost the divine virtues. Here, however, these too must be lost, so far as their practice is concerned, or rather the habit of exercising them, as acquired by herself, in order to appear fair: in reality, they are all the while being more strongly implanted. She loses virtue as virtue, but it is only that she may find it again in CHRIST. This degraded bride becomes, as she imagines, filled with pride. She, who was so patient, who suffered so

easily, finds that she can suffer nothing. Her senses revolt her by continual distractions. She can no longer restrain herself by her own efforts, as formerly; and what is worse, she contracts defilement at every step. She complains to her Beloved that the watchmen that go about the city have found her and wounded her (Cant. v. 7). I ought, however, to say that persons in this condition do not sin willingly. God usually reveals to them such a deep-seated corruption within themselves, that they cry with Job, "Oh, that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldest keep me in secret, until Thy wrath be past!" (Job xiv. 13).

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

between the purity of God and the impurity of the creature. The soul sees that it was originally created pure by God, and that it has contracted not only the original sin of Adam, but thousands of actual sins, so that its confusion is greater than can be expressed. The reason why Christians in this condition are despised by others, is not to be found in any particular faults which are observed in them, but because, as they no longer manifest the same ardour and fidelity which formerly distinguished them, the greatness of their fall is judged from this, which is a great mistake. Let this serve to explain or modify any statements or representations in the sequel, which may appear to be expressed too strongly, and which those who do not understand the experience might be liable to misinterpret. Observe, also, that when I speak of *corruption*, of *decay*, &c., I mean the destruction of the old man by the central conviction, and by an intimate experience of the depth of impurity and selfishness which there is in the heart of man, which, bringing him to see himself as he is apart from God, causes him to cry with David, "I am a worm and no man" (Ps. xxii. 6), and with Job, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me" (Job ix. 30, 31).

It is not, then, that this poor bride commits the

faults of which she imagines herself guilty, for in heart she was never purer than now; but her senses and natural powers, particularly the senses, being unsupported, wander away. Besides which, as the speed of her course towards God redoubles, and she forgets herself more, it is not to be wondered at that in running she soils herself in the muddy places through which she passes; and as all her attention is directed towards her Beloved, although she does not perceive it by reason of her own condition, she thinks no more of herself, and does not notice where she steps. So that, while believing herself most guilty, she does not willingly commit a single sin; though all her sins appear voluntary to herself, they are rather faults of surprise, which often she does not see until after they are committed. She cries to her Bridegroom, but He does not heed her, at least not perceptibly, though He sustains her with an invisible hand. Sometimes she tries to do better, but then she becomes worse; for the design of her Bridegroom in letting her fall *without wounding herself* (Ps. xxxvii. 24) is that she should lean no longer on herself; that she should recognise her helplessness; that she should sink into complete self-despair; and that she should say, "My soul chooseth death rather than life" (Job vii. 15). It is here that the soul begins truly to *hate itself* and to *know itself* as it

would never have done if it had not passed through this experience.

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

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

I say, then, that this is the only way in which we can be purified radically; and without it we should always be filthy, though outwardly we might appear very

clean. It is necessary that God should make the soul thoroughly sensible of its condition. We could never believe, without the experience, of what nature left to itself is capable. Yes, indeed, our own being, abandoned to itself, is worse than all devils. Therefore we must not believe that the soul in this state of misery is abandoned by God. It was never better sustained; but nature is, as it were, left a little alone, and makes all these ravages without the soul in itself taking any part in them. This poor desolate bride, running hither and thither in search of her Beloved, not only soils herself grievously, as I have said, by falling into faults of surprise and self-esteem, but she wounds herself with the thorns that come in her way. She becomes so wearied at length that she is forced to die in her race for want of help; that is, to expect nothing from herself or her own activity.

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

When He sees that it is becoming disheartened and inclined to give up the race altogether, He looks upon

it for a moment, and the poor bride finds herself wounded anew by this look. She would willingly say to Him, "Alas! why hast Thou thus compelled me to run? Oh, that I could find Thee; and see Thee face to face!" But alas! when she seems to lay hold of Him, He flees from her again. "I sought Thee," she cries, "but I found Thee not" (Cant. iii. 1).

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

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

purify her that He suffers her to become so soiled. When we put iron in the fire, to purify it and to purge it from its dross, it appears at first to be tarnished and blackened, but afterwards it is easy to see that it has been purified. Christ only makes His bride experience her own weakness, that she may lose all strength and all support in herself, and that, in her self-despair, He may carry her in His arms, and she may be willing to be thus borne; for whatever her course may be, she walks as a child; but when she is in God, and is borne by Him, her progress is infinite, since it is that of God Himself.

In addition to all this degradation, the bride sees others adorned with her spoils. When she sees a holy soul, she dare not approach it; she sees it adorned with all the ornaments which her Bridegroom has taken from her; but though she admires it, and sinks into the depths of nothingness, she cannot desire to have these ornaments again, so conscious is she of her unworthiness to wear them. She thinks it would be a profanation to put them upon a person so covered with mud and defilement. She even rejoices to see that, if she fills her Beloved with horror, there are others in whom He can take delight, and whom she regards as infinitely happy in having gained the love of her God: as for the ornaments, though she sees others decorated with them, she does not

suppose that these are the sources of their happiness. If she sees any blessedness in the possession of them, it is because they are the tokens of the love of her Beloved. When she is thus sensible of her littleness in the presence of such as these, whom she regards as queens, she does not know the good which will result to her from this nakedness, death, and decay. Her Bridegroom only unclothes her that He may be Himself her clothing: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," says St Paul (Rom. xiii. 14). He only kills her that He may be her life: "If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." He only annihilates her that she may be transformed in Himself.

This loss of virtue is only brought about by degrees, as well as the other losses, and this apparent inclination for evil is involuntary; for that evil which makes us so vile in our own eyes is really no evil at all.

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

the more important these virtues are, and the more strongly they cling to them, because they appear the more essential, the greater is the force with which they are torn from them.

Section IV.

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

This poor soul, after having lost its all, must at last lose *its own life* by an utter self-despair, or rather it must die worn out by terrible fatigue. Prayer in this degree is extremely painful, because the soul being no longer able to make use of its own powers, of which it seems to be entirely deprived, and God having taken from it a certain sweet and profound calm which supported it, is left like those poor children whom we see running here and there in search of bread, yet finding no one to supply their need, so that the power of prayer seems to be as entirely lost as if we

had never possessed it; but with this difference, that we feel the pain occasioned by the loss, because we have proved its value by its possession, while others are not sensible of the loss, because they have never known its enjoyment. The soul, then, can find no support in the creature; and if it feels itself carried away by the things of earth, it is only by impetuosity, and it can find nothing to satisfy it. Not that it does not seek to abandon itself to the things in which it formerly delighted; but alas! it finds in them nothing but bitterness, so that it is glad to leave them again, taking nothing back but sadness at its own unfaithfulness.

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

This unexplainable something which sustains the soul at its foundation, as it were, is the hardest of all to lose, and that which the soul endeavours the most strenuously to retain; for as it is too delicate, so it

appears the more divine and necessary: it would consent willingly to be deprived of the two other powers, and even of the will, so far as it is a distinct and perceived thing, if only this something might be left; for it could bear all its labours if it may have within itself the witness that it is born of God.

However, this must be lost, like the rest—that is, as to the sentiment—and then the soul enters into the sensible realisation of all the misery with which it is filled. And it is this which really produces *the spiritual death*; for whatever misery the soul might endure, if this, I know not what, were not lost, it would not die; and if, on the other hand, this were lost without the soul being conscious of its misery, it would be supported, and would not die. It can easily understand that it must give up all dependence upon its own feelings or upon any natural support, but to lose an almost imperceptible comfort, and to fall from weakness, to fall into the mire, to this it cannot consent. This is where reason fails, this is where terrible fears fill the heart, which seems to have only sufficient life to be sensible of its death.

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

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

What must we do then? We must be careful to give no support to the senses, to suffer them, and to let them find recreation in innocent ways; for as they are not capable of an inward operation, by endeavouring to restrain them we should injure health, and even mental strength. What I say applies only to this degree; for if we were to make this use of the senses in the time of the strength and activity of grace, we should do wrong; and our Lord Himself in His goodness makes us see the conduct that we should pursue; for at first, He puts such a pressure on the senses, they have no liberty. They only have to desire something in order to be deprived of it; God orders it thus that the senses may be drawn from their imperfect operation, to be confined within the heart; and in severing them outwardly, He binds them

inwardly so gently, that it costs them little to be deprived of everything; they even find more pleasure in this deprivation than in the possession of all things. But when they are sufficiently purified, God, who wishes to draw the soul out of itself with a contrary movement, permits the senses to expand outwardly, which appears to the soul as a great impurity. However, it has now happened seasonably, and to endeavour to order things otherwise, would be to purify ourselves in a different way from that which God desires, and therefore to defile ourselves anew.

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

Third Degree of the Passive Way of Faith, in its Consummation



THE torrent, as we have said, has passed through every imaginable vicissitude. It has been dashed against rocks; indeed, its course has been but a succession of falls from rock to rock; but it has always reappeared, and we have never seen it really lost. Now it begins to lose itself in gulf after gulf. Formerly it still had a course, though it was so precipitate, so confused, and so irregular; but here it is engulphed with a yet greater precipitation in unsearchable depths. For a long time it disappears altogether from view, then we perceive it slightly, but more by hearing than by sight, and it only appears to be again precipitated in a deeper gulf. It falls from abyss to abyss, from precipice to precipice, until at last it falls into the depths of the sea, where, losing all form, it is lost to be found no more, having become

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

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

A man, after his death and before his burial, is still among the living: he still has the face of a man, though he is an object of terror; thus the soul, in the commencement of this degree, still bears some resemblance to what it was before; there remains in it

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

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

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

The heart endures its bitterness; but, alas! how sweet this state is even now, and how easy it would be to remain in the sepulchre, if it were not necessary to decay! The old man becomes gradually corrupted; formerly there were weaknesses and failings, now the soul sees a depth of corruption of which it had hitherto been ignorant, for it could not imagine what were its self-esteem and selfishness. O God! what horror this soul suffers in seeing itself thus decaying! All troubles, the contempt and aversion of man, affect it no longer. It is even insensible to the deprivation of the Sun of Righteousness; it knows that His light does not penetrate the tomb. But to feel its own corruption, that it cannot endure. What

would it not rather suffer? But it must experience, to the very depths of its being, what it is.

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

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

At length by degrees the soul becomes accustomed to its corruption: it feels it less, and finds it natural,

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

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

The faithfulness of the soul in this condition consists in letting itself be buried, crushed, trampled on,

without making any more movement than a corpse, without seeking in any way to prevent its putrefaction. There are those who wish to apply balm to themselves. No, no; leave yourselves as you are. You must know your corruption, and see the infinite depth of depravity that is in you. To apply balm is but to endeavour by good works to hide your corruption. Oh, do it not! You will wrong yourselves. God can suffer you; why cannot you suffer yourselves? The soul, reduced to nothingness, must remain in it, without wishing to change its state; and it is then that the torrent loses itself in the sea, never to find itself in itself again, but to become one with the sea. It is then that this corpse feels without feeling, that it is gradually reanimated, and assumes *a new life*; but this is done so gradually that it seems like a dream. And this brings us to the last degree, which is the commencement of the *divine and truly inner life*, including numberless smaller degrees, and in which the advancement is infinite: just as this torrent can perpetually advance in the sea, and imbibe more of its nature, the longer it remains in it.

Fourth Degree of the Passive Way of Faith, which is the Commencement of the Divine Life



WHEN the torrent begins to lose itself in the sea, it can easily be distinguished. Its movement is perceptible, until at length it gradually loses all form of its own, to take that of the sea. So the soul, leaving this degree, and beginning to lose itself, yet retains something of its own; but in a short time it loses all that it had peculiar to itself. The corpse which has been reduced to ashes is still dust and ashes; but if another person were to swallow those ashes, they would no longer have an identity, but would form part of the person who had taken them. The soul hitherto, though dead and buried, has retained its own being; it is only in this degree that it is really taken out of itself.

All that has taken place up to this point has been in

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

It is in the tomb that the soul begins to resume life, and the light enters insensibly. Then it can be truly said that "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Matt. iv. 16). There is a beautiful figure of this resurrection in Ezekiel (chap. xxxvii.), where the dry bones gradually assume life: and then there is that other passage, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John v. 25). O you who are coming out of the sepulchre! you feel within yourselves a germ of life springing up little by little: you are quite astonished to find a secret strength taking possession of you: your ashes are reanimated: you feel yourselves to be in a new country. The poor soul, which only expected

to remain at rest in its grave, receives an agreeable surprise. It does not know what to think: it supposes that the sun must have shed upon it a few scattered rays through some opening or chink, whose brightness will only last for a moment. It is still more astonished when it feels this secret vigour permeating its entire being, and finds that it gradually receives a new life, to lose it no more for ever, unless it be by the most flagrant unfaithfulness.

But this new life is not like the former one: it is a *life in God*. It is a perfect life. The soul *lives no longer* and works no longer of itself, but *God* lives, acts, and operates in it (Gal. ii. 20); and this goes on increasing, so that it becomes perfect with God's perfection, rich with God's riches, and loving with God's love.

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

increasing day by day to immensity: every virtue is restored to it, but in God.

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

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

The difference is, that it is compelled to action by God without being conscious of it, whereas formerly it was nature that acted. It seems to itself to do

neither right nor wrong, but it lives satisfied, peaceful, doing what it is made to do in a steady and resolute manner.

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

But with what satisfaction is this soul satisfied? With the satisfaction of God, immense, general, without knowing or understanding what it is that satisfies it; for here all sentiments, tastes, views, particular opinions, however delicate they may be, are taken from it: that certain vague, indefinable something, which formerly occupied without occupying it, is gone, and nothing remains to it. But this insensibility is very different to that of death, burial, and decay. That was a deprivation of life, a distaste, a separation, the powerlessness of the dying united with the insensibility of the dead; but this is an *elevation* above all these things, which does not remove them, but renders them useless. A dead man is deprived of all

the functions of life by the powerlessness of death; but if he were to be raised gloriously, he would be full of life, without having the power to preserve it by means of the senses: and being placed above all means by virtue of his germ of immortality, he would no longer feel that which animated him, although he would know himself to be alive.

In this degree God cannot be tasted, seen, or felt, being no longer distinct from ourselves, but one with us. The soul has neither inclination nor taste for anything: in the period of death and burial it experienced this, but in a very different manner. Then it arose from distaste and powerlessness, but now it is the effect of *plenitude* and *abundance*; just as if a person could live on air, he would be full without feeling his plenitude, or knowing in what way he had been satisfied; he would not be empty and unable to eat or to taste, but free from all necessity of eating by reason of his satisfaction, without knowing how the air, entering by all his pores, had penetrated equally at all parts.

The soul here is in God, as in the air which is natural to it, and it is no more sensible of its fulness than we are of the air we breathe. Yet it is full, and nothing is wanting to it; therefore all its desires are taken from it. Its peace is great, but not as it was before.

Formerly it was an inanimate peace a certain sepulture, from which there sometimes escaped exhalations which troubled it. When it was reduced to ashes, it was at peace; but it was a barren peace, like that of a corpse, which would be at peace in the midst of the wildest storms of the sea: it would not feel them, and would not be troubled by them, its state of death rendering is insensible. But here the soul is raised, as it were, to a mountain-top, from which it sees the waves rolling and tossing, without fearing their attacks; or rather it is at the bottom of the sea, where there is always tranquillity, even while the surface is agitated. The senses may suffer their sorrows, but at the centre there is always the same calm tranquillity, because He who possesses it is immutable.

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

But what must it do in order to be faithful to God? Nothing, and less than nothing. It must simply suffer itself to be possessed, acted upon, and moved without resistance, remaining in the state which is natural to it, waiting for what every moment may bring to it, and receiving it from Him, without either adding to or taking from it; letting itself be led at all times and to any place, regardless of sight or reason, and without thinking of either; letting itself go naturally into all things, without considering what would be best or most plausible; remaining in the state of evenness and stability in which God has placed it, without being troubled to do anything; but leaving to God the care of providing its opportunities, and of doing all for it; not making definite acts of abandonment, but simply resting in the state of abandonment in which it already is, and which is natural to it.

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

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

It may be asked, Is the soul unconscious of its faults, or does it commit none? It does commit them, and is

more conscious of them than ever, especially in the commencement of its new life. The faults committed are often more subtile and delicate than formerly. The soul knows them better, because its eyes are open; but it is not troubled by them, and can do nothing to rid itself of them. It is true that, when it has been guilty of unfaithfulness or sin, it is sensible of a certain cloud; but it passes over, without the soul itself doing anything to dispel it, or to cleanse itself; apart from which, any efforts it might make would be useless, and would only serve to increase its impurity; so that it would be deeply sensible that the second stain was worse than the first. It is not a question of returning to God, because a *return* presupposes a departure; and if we are in God, we have but to abide in Him; just as, when there arises a little cloud in the middle region of air, if the wind blows, it moves the clouds, but does not dissipate them; if, on the contrary, the sun shines forth, they will soon be dispelled. The more subtile and delicate the clouds are, the more quickly they will be dissipated.

Oh! if we had sufficient fidelity never to look at ourselves, what progress might we not make! Our sights of ourselves resemble certain plants in the sea, which, just so long as their support lasts, prevent bodies from falling. If the branches are very delicate, the weight of the body forces them down, and we are

only delayed for a moment; but if we look at ourselves willingly and long, we shall be delayed just so long a time as the look may occupy, and our loss will be great indeed. The defects of this state are certain light emotions or sights of self, which are born and die in a moment—certain winds of self, which pass over the calm sea, and cause ripples; but these faults are taken from us little by little, and continually become more delicate.

The soul, on leaving the tomb, finds itself, without knowing how, clothed with the *inclinations* of Christ; not by distinct and natural views of Him, but by its natural condition, finding these inclinations just when they are needed, without thinking of them; as a person who possesses a hidden treasure might find it unexpectedly in the time of his need. The soul is surprised when, without having reflected on the mind and disposition of Christ, it finds them naturally implanted within it. These dispositions of Christ are lowliness, meekness, submission, and the other virtues which He possessed. The soul finds that all these are acting within it, but so easily, that they seem to have become natural to it. Its treasury is in God alone, where it can draw upon it ceaselessly in every time of need, without in any degree diminishing it. It is then that it really "puts on" Jesus Christ (Rom. xiii. 14); and it is henceforth He who

acts, speaks, moves in the soul, the Lord Jesus Christ being its moving principle. Now those around it do not inconvenience it; the heart is enlarged to contain them. It desires neither activity nor retreat, but only to be each moment what God makes it to be.

As in this condition the soul is capable of infinite advancement, I leave those who are living in it to write of it, the light not being given me for the higher degrees, and my soul not being sufficiently advanced in God to see or to know them. All that I shall add is, that it is easy to see by the length of the road necessary to be taken in order to arrive at God that the end is not so soon attained as we are apt to imagine, and that even the most spiritual and enlightened mistake the consummation of the *passive way of light and love* for the end of this one, when in reality it is but the commencement.

I must also remark, that what I have said touching the *mind* of Christ commences as soon as we enter the way of *naked faith*. Although the soul in the former degrees has no distinct sights of Christ, it has nevertheless a desire to be conformed to His image. It covets the cross, lowliness, poverty; then this desire is lost, and there remains a secret inclination for the same things, which continually deepens and simplifies, becoming every day more intimate and

more hidden. But here the mind of Christ is the mind of the soul, natural and habitual to it, as something no longer distinct from itself, but as its own being and its own life; Christ exercising it without going out of the soul, and the soul exercising it with Him, in Him, without going out of Him; not like something distinct, which it knows, sees, attempts, practises, but as that which is natural to it. All the actions of life, such as breathing, are done naturally, without thought, rule, or measure; and they are done unconsciously by the person who does them. It is thus with the mind of Christ in this degree, which continually develops, as the soul is more transformed in Him, and becomes more thoroughly one with Him.

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

here the soul feels it to be God, like the rest; all that constitutes the life of this soul, all that it has, moment by moment, being God to it.

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

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

PART I



More Particular Description of Several Characteristics of the Resurrection Life



I OMITTED to say that this is where true liberty begins; not, as some imagine, a liberty which necessitates idleness; that would be imprisonment rather than liberty, fancying ourselves free because, having an aversion to our own works, we no longer practise them. The liberty of which I speak is of a different nature; it does all things easily which God would have done, and the more easily in proportion to the duration and the painfulness of the incapacity to do them which we have previously experienced. I confess I do not understand the resurrection state of certain Christians, who profess to have attained it, and who yet remain all their lives powerless and destitute; for here the soul takes up a true life. The actions of a raised man are the actions of life; and if the soul remain lifeless, I say that it may

be dead or buried, but not risen. A risen soul should be able to perform without difficulty all the actions which it has performed in the past, only they would be done in God. Did not Lazarus, after his resurrection, exercise all the functions of life as formerly, and Jesus Christ after His resurrection was willing to eat and to converse with men. And so of those who believe themselves to be risen with Christ, and who are nevertheless stunted in their spiritual growth and incapable of devotion,—I say, that they do not possess a resurrection life, for there everything is restored to the soul a hundred-fold. There is a beautiful illustration of this in the case of Job, whose history I consider a mirror of the spiritual life. First God robbed him of his wealth, which we may consider as setting forth gifts and graces; then of his children; this signifies the destruction of natural sensibilities, and of our own works, which are as our children and our most cherished possessions: then God deprived him of his health, which symbolises the loss of virtue; then He touched his person, rendering him an object of horror and contempt. It even appears that this holy man was guilty of sin, and failed in resignation; he was accused by his friends of being justly punished for his crimes; there was no healthy part left in him. But after he had been brought down to the dunghill, and reduced as it were

to a corpse, did not God restore everything to him, his wealth, his children, his health, and his life?

It is the same with spiritual resurrection; everything is restored, with a wonderful power to use it without being defiled by it, clinging to it without appropriating it as before. All is done in God, and things are used as though they were not used. It is here that true liberty and true life are found. "If we have been planted in the likeness of Christ's death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. vi. 5). Can there be freedom where there are powerlessness and restrictions? No; "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed," but with His liberty.

This is where true liberty begins. Nothing that God desires is difficult to us, or costs us anything; and if a person is called to preach, to instruct, &c., he does it with a marvellous facility, without the necessity of preparing a discourse, being well able to practise what Jesus commanded His disciples, "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" (Matt. x. 19; Luke

xxi. 15). This is not given till after an experience of powerlessness; and the deeper that experience has been, the greater is the liberty. But it is useless to endeavour to force ourselves into this condition; for as God would not be the source, we should not realise the desired results. It may well be said of this risen life, that all good things are given with it. In this state, the soul cannot practise the virtues as virtues; it is not even conscious of them; but all the virtues have become so habitual to it, that it practises them naturally, almost instinctively. When it hears others speak of deep humiliation, it is surprised to find that it experiences nothing of the kind; and if it sought to humble itself, it would be astonished, as though it were guilty of unfaithfulness, and would even find it impossible, because the state of annihilation through which it has passed has placed it below all humiliation; for in order to be humbled, we must *be something*, and nothingness cannot be brought lower; its present state has placed it above all humility and all virtue by its transformation into God, so that its powerlessness arises both from its annihilation and its elevation. Those persons have nothing outwardly to distinguish them from others, unless it be that they do no harm to any one; for, so far as the exterior is concerned, they are very ordinary, and therefore do

not attract observation, but live in a state of quiet rest, free from all care and anxiety. They experience a deep joy, arising from the absence of all fear, or desire, or longing, so that nothing can disturb their repose or diminish their joy. David possessed this experience when he said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid" (Ps. xxvii. 1).

A heart ravished with joy no longer looks at itself, nor thinks of itself; and its joy, though great, is not an object of contemplation. The soul is in a state of ravishment and ecstasy which cause no uneasiness, because God has enlarged its capacity almost to infinitude. Those ecstasies which cause the loss of consciousness are the effect of human imperfection, and are nevertheless the admiration of men. God is, as it were, drawing the soul out of itself that it may be lost in Him; but as it has neither sufficient purity nor strength to bear the process, it becomes necessary, either that God should cease thus to draw it, which involves the cessation of the ecstasy, or that nature should succumb and die, which not unfrequently happens. But in this resurrection life,

the ecstasy lasts, not for a few hours only, but for ever, without either violence or variation, God having purified and strengthened the subject of it to the extent necessary to enable it to bear this glorious ravishment. It seems to me that when God goes out of Himself, He creates an ecstasy,—but I dare not say this for fear of teaching an error. What I say then is, that the soul drawn out of itself experiences an inward ecstasy; but a happy one, because it is only drawn out of itself in order that it may be drowned and lost in God, quitting its own imperfections and its own limited thoughts to participate in those of God.

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

. . .

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

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

so rare, and it is this which constitutes perfect abandonment. There sometimes occur in this life wonderful manifestations to the natural senses, but this is not usual; it is like Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Stability, Experience, Elevation, and Extreme Purity of the Abandoned Soul

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

It is impossible to tell the strange proofs to which God subjects the hearts which are perfectly abandoned, and which offer no resistance to Him in anything; neither, if I could speak of them, should I be understood. All that I can say is, that He does not leave them the shadow of anything that could be named, either in God or out of God. And He so raises them above all by the loss of all, that nothing

less than God Himself, either in earth or heaven, can stop them. Nothing can harm them, because there is no longer anything hurtful for them, by reason of their union with God, which, in associating with sinners, contracts no defilement, because of its essential purity.

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

The peace of those in this condition is so invariable and so profound, that nothing either in earth or hell can disturb it for a moment. The senses are still susceptible to suffering; but when they are overpowered by it, and cry out with the anguish, if they are questioned, or if they examine themselves, they will find nothing in themselves that suffers: in the midst of the greatest pain, they say that they

suffer nothing, being unable to admit that they are suffering, because of the divine state of blessedness which reigns in the centre or supreme part.

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

If you wish to attribute any goodness to those who are thus transformed in God, they will object to it, not being able to find anything in themselves that can be named, affirmed, or heard. They are in a complete *negation*. It is this which causes the difference of terms and expressions employed by writers on this subject, who find a difficulty in making themselves understood, except by those whose experience accords with their own. Another effect of this negation is, that the soul having lost all that was its own, God having substituted Himself, it can attribute nothing either to itself or to God; because it knows God only, of whom it can say nothing. Here all is God to the soul, because it is no longer a question of seeing all *in* God; for to see things in God is to distinguish them in

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

Men would condemn such a state, saying it makes us something less than the meanest insect; and so it does, not by obstinacy and firmness of purpose, but by powerlessness to interfere with ourselves. You may ask one in this condition, "Who leads you to do such and such a thing? Is it God who has told you to do it, or has made known to you His will concerning it?" He will reply, "I know nothing, and I do not think of knowing anything: all is God and His will; and I no longer know what is meant by the will of God,

because that will has become natural to me." "But why should you do this rather than that?" "I do not know: I let myself be guided by Him who draws me." "Why so?" "He draws me because I, being no longer anything, am carried along with God, and am drawn by Him *alone*. *He* goes hither and thither: *He* acts; and I am but an instrument, which I neither see nor regard. I have no longer a separate interest, because by the loss of myself I have lost all self-interest. Neither am I capable of giving any reason for my conduct, for I no longer have a conduct: yet I act infallibly so long as I have no other principle than that of the Infallible One."

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

The soul is in this condition "hidden *with Christ* in God" (Col. iii. 3); *mingled* with Him, as the river of which we have spoken is mingled with the sea, so that it can be separated no more. It has the ebb and flow of the sea, no longer by choice, will, and liberty, but

by nature: the immense sea having absorbed its shallow limited waters, it participates in all the movements of the sea. It is the sea which bears it, and yet it is not borne, since it has lost its own being; and having no other motion than that of the sea, it acts as the sea acts: not because it naturally possesses the same qualities, but because, having lost all its natural qualities, it has no others but those of the sea, without having the power of ever being anything but sea. It is not, as I have said, that it does not so retain its own nature, that, if God so willed it, in a moment it could be separated from the sea; but He does not do this. Neither does it lose the nature of the creature; and God could, if He pleased, cast it off from His divine bosom: but He does not do it, and the creature acts as it were divinely.

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

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

Ah! if those who find it so difficult to leave themselves to God could only experience this, they would confess that though the way might be arduous, a single day of this life was a sufficient recompense for years of trouble. But by what means does God bring the soul here? By ways altogether opposed to natural wisdom and imagination. He builds up by casting down; He gives life by killing. Oh! if I could tell what He does, and the strange means which He

uses to bring us here. But silence! men are not able to hear it; those who have experienced it know what it is. Here there is no need of place or time; all is alike, all places are good; and wherever the order of God may take us, it is well, because all means are useless and infinitely surpassed: when we have reached the end, there is nothing left to wish for.

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

Perfect Union or Deiformity



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

happens to the soul of which I have been speaking. But after the bread is baked, it is fit for the mouth of the king, who not only unites it to himself by contact with it, but eats it, digests it, consumes it, and annihilates it, that it may enter into his composition, and become part of himself.

You will observe that though the bread has been eaten by the king, which is the greatest honour it can receive, and is its end, yet it cannot be changed into his substance unless it be annihilated by digestion, losing all its natural form and quality. Oh, how well this sets forth all the conditions of the soul; that of union being very different to that of transformation, in which the soul, in order to become one with God, transformed and changed into Him, must not only be eaten, but digested, that, after having lost all that was its own, it may become one with God Himself: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us, I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John xvii. 21, 23). "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17).

This state is very little known, therefore it is not spoken of. O state of life! how narrow is the way which leadeth unto thee! O love the most pure of all,

because Thou art God Himself! O love immense and independent, which nothing can limit or straiten!

Yet these people appear quite common, as I have said, because they have nothing outwardly to distinguish them, unless it be an infinite freedom, which is often scandalised by those who are limited and confined within themselves, to whom, as they see nothing better than they have themselves, all that is different to what they possess appears evil. But the holiness of these simple and innocent ones whom they despise is a holiness incomparably more eminent than all which they consider holy, because their own works, though performed with such strictness, have no more strength than the principle in which they originate, which is always the effort, though raised and ennobled, of a weak creature; but those who are consummated in the divine union act in God by a principle of infinite strength; and thus their smallest actions are more agreeable to God than the multitude of heroic deeds achieved by others, which appear so great in the sight of men. Therefore those in this degree do not seek for great things to do, resting contented with being what God makes them at each moment. These do more, without doing anything, for the conversion of a kingdom, than five

hundred preachers who have not attained this condition.

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

Oh, how many Christians, quite seraphic in appearance, are far from this! But in this condition, as in all others, there are souls more or less divine. God hides them in His bosom, and under the veil of a most common life, so that they may be known to Him alone, though they are His delight. Here the secrets of God, in Himself and in the hearts of those in whom He dwells, are revealed; not by word, sight, or light, but by the science of God, which abides in Him; and when such people have to write or speak,

they are themselves astonished to find that all flows from a divine centre, without their having been aware that they possessed such treasures. They find themselves in a profound science, without memory or recollection; like an inestimable treasure, which is unobserved until there is a necessity for its manifestation; and it is in the manifestation to others that they find the revelation to themselves. When they write, they are astonished to find themselves writing of things with which they neither knew nor believed themselves to be acquainted; although, as they write, they cannot doubt their apprehension of them. It is not so with other Christians; their light precedes their experience, as a person sees from afar the things which he does not possess, and describes what he has seen, known, heard, &c. But these are persons who hold a treasure within themselves, which they do not see until after the manifestation, although it is in their possession.

Yet, after all, this does not well express the idea which I wish to convey. God is in this soul; or rather the soul no longer exists; it no longer acts, but God acts, and it is the instrument. God includes all treasures in Himself, and manifests them through this soul to others; and thus, as it draws them from its centre, it becomes aware of their presence, though it had never reflected upon them before. I am sure

that any who have attained this degree will enter into my meaning, and will easily distinguish the difference between the states I have described. Those whom I mentioned first, see things and enjoy them as we enjoy the sun; but the others have become one with the sun itself, which does not enjoy nor reflect upon its own light. This condition is permanent, and its only vicissitude, so far as its centre is concerned, is a greater advancement in God: and as God is infinite, He can continually make the soul more divine by enlarging its capacity, as the water of which we have spoken expands in proportion as it is lost in the sea, with which it mingles incessantly without ever leaving it. It is the same with these souls. All who are in this degree have God, but some more and some less fully. They are all full, but all do not possess an equal plenitude. A little vase when full is as truly filled as a larger one, yet it does not contain an equal quantity. So all these souls are filled with the fulness of God, but it is according to their receptive capacity, which capacity God continually enlarges. Therefore the longer Christians live in this divine condition, the more they expand, and their capacity becomes continually more immense, without anything being left for them to do or desire; for they always possess God in His fulness, and He never leaves an empty corner in their hearts. As they grow and enlarge, He

fills them with Himself, as we see with the air. A small room is full of air, but a large one contains more. If you continually increase the size of a room, in the same proportion the air will enter, infallibly though imperceptibly: and thus, without changing its state or disposition, and without any new sensation, the soul increases in capacity and in plenitude. But this growing capacity can only be received in a state of nothingness, because in any other condition there is an opposition to growth.

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

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

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

Actions and Sufferings of those in a State of Union with God



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

It is the duty of this soul to follow blindly with reflection all the movings of God. Here all reflection is banished, and the soul would find a difficulty in indulging in it, even if it desired to do so. But as by an effort it might accomplish it, this habit should be scrupulously avoided; because reflection alone has the power of leading man to enter into

himself, and of drawing him out of God. Now, I say, that if man does not go out of God he will never sin; and if he sin, it is because he has gone out of Him, which can only be the effect of appropriation; and the soul can only take itself back from its abandonment by reflex action, which would be to it a hell similar to that into which the great angel fell when, looking with complacency upon himself, and preferring himself to God, he became a devil. And this state would be more terrible as that which had been previously attained was more advanced.

It will be objected that suffering is impossible in this condition, not only as to the centre, but also as to the senses, because in order to suffering there must be reflex action, and it is reflection which constitutes the principal and the most painful part of suffering. All this is true in a certain sense; and as it is a fact that souls far less advanced than these suffer sometimes by reflection, sometimes by impression, I maintain that it is also true that those in this degree cannot suffer otherwise than by impression. This does not imply that sorrow may not be unlimited, and far more intense than that which is reflected, as the burning of one brought into actual contact with fire would be much more severe than that of one who is burned by the reflection of fire. It will be said, But God can teach them by means of reflection how to

suffer. God will not make use of reflection for this end. He can show them in a moment what they have to suffer by a direct view, and not by a reflected one, as those in heaven see in God that which is in Him, and that which passes out from Him to His creatures, without looking at these things or reflecting upon them, but remaining absorbed and lost in God. It is this which deceives so many spiritually-minded people, who imagine that nothing can be either known or suffered but by reflection. On the contrary, this kind of knowledge and suffering is very slight compared to that which is imparted in other ways.

All such suffering as can be distinguished and known, though expressed in such exaggerated terms, does not equal that of those who do not know their suffering, and cannot admit that they do suffer, because of the great separation between the two parts. It is true that they suffer extreme pain; it is true that they suffer nothing, and that they are in a state of perfect contentment.

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

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

It is not here as in the passive state of love. There the soul is filled with a love of suffering and of the good pleasure of God: here it is a loss of the will in God by a state of deification, where all is God without its being recognised as such. The soul is established by its condition in its sovereign, unchangeable good. It is in a perfect beatitude, where nothing can cross its perfect happiness, which is rendered its permanent condition; for many possess it temporarily, or know it temporarily, before it becomes their permanent condition. God gives first the knowledge of the condition, then a desire for it; then He gives it confusedly and indistinctly; and lastly, He makes it a normal condition, and establishes the soul in it for ever.

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

capacity of the soul, and can continually deify it more and more, God being an unfathomable depth.

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

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

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

BONUS Prayer Quotes

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Prayer Quotes

"Our praying, however, needs to be pressed and pursued with an energy that never tires, a persistency which will not be denied, and a courage which never fails." — E. M. Bounds

"God does nothing but by prayer, and everything with it." — John Wesley

"Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work." — Oswald Chambers

"In no other way can the believer become as fully involved with God's work especially the work of world evangelism as in intercessory prayer.... When the prayer warrior intercedes, he forgets his personal need and focuses all of his faith and prayer attention on others. To intercede is to mediate. It is to stand between a lost being and an Almighty God, praying that this person will come to know about God and His salvation." — Dick Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*

"Search for a person who claims to have found Christ apart from someone else's prayer, and your search may go on forever." — E. Bauman

"Have you any days of fasting and prayer? Storm the throne of grace and persevere therein, and mercy will come down." — John Wesley

"No one's a firmer believer in the power of prayer than the devil; not that he practices it, but he suffers from it." — Guy H. King

"Perhaps you will have to spend hours on your knees or upon your face before the throne. Never mind. Wait. God will do great things for you if you will wait for Him. Yield to Him. Cooperate with Him." — John Smith

"If the church would only awaken to her responsibility of intercession, we could well evangelize the world in a short time. It is not God's plan that the world be merely evangelized ultimately. It should be evangelized in every generation. There should be a constant gospel witness in every corner of the world so that no sinner need close his eyes in death without hearing the gospel, the good news of salvation through Christ." — T. S. Hegre

"O brother, pray; in spite of Satan, pray; spend hours in prayer; rather neglect friends than not pray; rather fast, and lose breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper—and sleep too—than not pray. And we must not talk about prayer, we must pray in right earnest. The Lord is near. He comes softly while the virgin slumbers." — Andrew A. Bonar

"Next to the wonder of seeing my Savior will be, I think, the wonder that I made so little use of the power of prayer." — D. L. Moody

"A day without prayer is a day without blessing, and a life without prayer is a life without power." — Edwin Harvey

"To strive in prayer means to struggle through those hindrances which would restrain or even prevent us entirely from continuing in persevering prayer. It

means to be so watchful at all times that we can notice when we become slothful in prayer and that we go to the Spirit of prayer to have this remedied. In this struggle, too, the decisive factor is the Spirit of prayer." — O. Hallesby

"Quit playing, start praying. Quit feasting, start fasting. Talk less with men, talk more with God. Listen less to men, listen to the words of God. Skip travel, start travail." — Leonard Ravenhill

"It is a tremendously hard thing to pray aright, yea, it is verily the science of all sciences." — Martin Luther

"The main lesson about prayer is just this: Do it! Do it! **DO IT!** You want to be *taught* to pray. My answer is: *pray and never* faint, and then you shall never fail." — John Laidlaw

"Prayer—secret, fervent, believing prayer—lies at the root of all personal godliness." — Carey's Brotherhood, Serampore

"None can believe how powerful prayer is, and what it is able to effect, but those who have learned it by experience. It is a great matter when in extreme need to take hold on prayer. I know, whenever I have prayed earnestly, that I have been amply heard, and have obtained more than I prayed for. God indeed

sometimes delayed, but at last He came." — Martin Luther

"You know the value of prayer: it is precious beyond all price. Never, never neglect it." — Sir Thomas Buxton

"Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, the third thing necessary to a minister. Pray, then my dear brother; pray, pray, pray." — Edward Payson

"It is not enough to begin to pray, nor to pray aright; nor is it enough to continue for a time to pray; but we must patiently, believingly, continue in prayer until we obtain an answer; and further we have not only to continue in prayer unto the end, but we have also to believe that God does hear us, and will answer our prayers. Most frequently we fail in not continuing in prayer until the blessing is obtained, and in not expecting the blessing." — George Müller

"Each time, before you intercede, be quiet first, and worship God in His glory. Think of what He can do, and how He delights to hear the prayers of His redeemed people. Think of your place and privilege in Christ, and expect great things!" — Andrew Murray

"There is nothing more appalling than the wholesale way in which unthinking people plead to the Almighty the richest and most spiritual of His promises, and claim their immediate fulfillment, without themselves fulfilling one of the conditions either on which they are promised or can possibly be given." — H. Drummond

"The reason why we obtain no more in prayer is because we expect no more. God usually answers us according to our own hearts." — Richard Alleine

"Satan cannot deny but that great wonders have been wrought by prayer. As the spirit of prayer goes up, so his kingdom goes down. Satan's strategems against prayer are three. First, if he can, he will keep thee from prayer. If that be not feasible, secondly, he will strive to interrupt thee in prayer. And, thirdly, if that plot takes not, he will labour to hinder the success of thy prayer." —William Gurnall

"The devil is aware that one hour of close fellowship, hearty converse with God in prayer, is able to pull down what he hath been contriving and building many a year." — Flavel

"Beware in your prayers, above everything else, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you know what He can do. Expect unexpected

things 'above all that we ask or think.'" — Andrew Murray

"The devil is not put to flight by a courteous request. He meets us at every turn, contends for every inch, and our progress has to be registered in heart's blood and tears." — Charles E. Cowman

"To the man who prays habitually (not only when he feels like it—that is one of the snares of religion—but also when he does not feel like it) Christ is sure to make Himself real." — James Stewart

"If we would pray aright, the first thing we should do is to see to it that we really get an audience with God, that we really get into His very presence. Before a word of petition is offered, we should have the definite consciousness that we are talking to God, and should believe that He is listening and is going to grant the thing that we ask of Him." — Dr. R. A. Torrey

"Pray for 'all men.' We usually pray more for *things* than we do for *men*. Our prayers should be thrown across their pathway as they rush in their downward course to a lost eternity." — E. M. Bounds

"There are two ways of praying. One asks and hopes; the other craves and waits until he has obtained. It is

just this 'until' that characterises the latter. "One seeks God and finds Him; the other strives with God and triumphs. The first observes scruiously his daily devotions; the second stays on his knees hours a day, through the night. "The first fits in with the ordinary course of life; the second watches, fasts, cries, weeps, sweats blood. The first we have known since we learned to know the Lord; the second...'Lord, teach us to pray.'" — M. Monod

"Fastings and vigils without a special object in view are time run to waste." — David Livingstone

"Prayer is reaching out and after the unseen; fasting, letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepens, confirms the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves, to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God." — Andrew Murray

"Great grief prays with great earnestness. Prayer is not a collection of balanced phrases; it is the pouring out of the soul. What is love if it be not fiery? What are prayers if the heart be not ablaze? They are the battles of the soul. In them men wrestle with principalities and powers... The prayer that prevails is not the work of lips and fingertips. It is the cry of a

broken heart and the travail of a stricken soul." — Samuel Chadwick

"Effective prayer is prayer that attains what it seeks. It is prayer that moves God, effecting its end." — Charles G. Finney

"The most fervent prayer meetings are in hell." — Leonard Ravenhill

"Satan's tactics seem to be as follows: He will first of all oppose our breaking through to the place of a real living faith, by all means in his power. He detests the prayer of faith, for it is an authoritative 'notice to quit.' We often have to strive and wrestle in prayer before we attain this quiet, restful faith. And until we break right through and *join hands with God* we have not attained to a real faith at all. However, once we attain to a real faith, all the forces of hell are impotent to annul it. The real battle begins when the prayer of faith has been offered." — J. O. Fraser

"Mind how you pray. Make real business of it. Let it never be a dead formality...plead the promise in a truthful, business-like way...Ask for what you want, because the Lord has promised it. Believe that you have the blessing, and go forth to your work in full assurance of it. Go from your knees singing, because the promise

is fulfilled: thus will your prayer be answered...the strength [not length] of your prayer...wins...God; and the strength of prayer lies in your faith in the promise which you pleaded before the Lord." — C. H. Spurgeon

"Where there is much prayer, there will be much of the Spirit; where there is much of the Spirit, there will be ever-increasing prayer." — Andrew Murray

"A godly man is a praying man. As soon as grace is poured in, prayer is poured out. Prayer is the soul's traffic with Heaven; God comes down to us by His Spirit, and we go up to Him by prayer." — T. Watson

"A Christian can obtain deep feeling, by thinking on the object. God is not going to pour these things on you, without any effort on your own. You must cherish the slightest impressions. Take the Bible, and go over the passages that show the condition and prospects of the world. Look at the world, look at your children, and your neighbors and see their condition while they remain in sin; and persevere in prayer and effort till you obtain the blessing of the Spirit of God to dwell in you." — Charles G. Finney

"There is no power like that of prevailing prayer—of Abraham pleading for Sodom, Jacob wrestling in the stillness of the night, Moses standing in the breach, Hannah intoxicated with sorrow, David heart-broken

with remorse and grief, Jesus in sweat and blood. Add to this list from the records of the church your personal observation and experience, and always there is cost of passion unto blood. Such prayer prevails. It turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings power. It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God." —Samuel Chadwick

"But have we Holy Ghost power—power that restricts the devil's power, pulls down strongholds and obtains promises? Daring delinquents will be damned if they are not delivered from the devil's dominion. What has hell to fear other than a God-anointed, prayer-powered church?" — Leonard Ravenhill

"Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure." — D. L. Moody

"There is no way that Christians, in a private capacity, can do so much to promote the work of God and advance the kingdom of Christ as by prayer." — Jonathan Edwards

"As it is the business of tailors to make clothes, and the business of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray!" — Martin Luther

"In prayer, it is better to have heart without words, than words without heart. Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin entice a man to cease from prayer. The spirit of prayer is more precious than treasures of gold and silver. Pray often, for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan." — John Bunyan

"You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you can never do more than pray until you have prayed." — A. J. Gordon

"Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness." — Martin Luther

"Intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent. What wonders it has wrought! The Word of God teems with its marvelous deeds. Believer, thou hast a mighty engine in thy hand, use it well, use it constantly, use it with faith, and thou shalt surely be a benefactor to thy brethren." — C. H. Spurgeon

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." — Lord Alfred Tennyson

"Prayer is not a convenient device for imposing our will upon God, or bending his will to ours, but the prescribed way of subordinating our will to his." — John R. W. Stott

"The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray." — Samuel Chadwick

"Rich is the person who has a praying friend." — Janice Hughes

"Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth...God does nothing but in answer to prayer." — John Wesley

"Men are God's method. The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men who the Holy Spirit can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not come on machinery but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer." — E. M. Bounds

"There is a general kind of praying which fails for lack of precision. It is as if a regiment of soldiers should all fire off their guns anywhere. Possibly

somebody would be killed, but the majority of the enemy would be missed." — C. H. Spurgeon

"If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the Devil gets the victory through the day...I have so much business, I can not get on without spending three hours daily in prayer." — Martin Luther