



A Guide to True Peace

or

The Excellency of Inward and Spiritual Prayer

INTRODUCTION

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The *Guide to True Peace* is compiled principally from the *Short Method of Prayer* of Madame Guyon, the *Maxims of the Saints* of Fenelon, and the *Spiritual Guide* of Molinos. The writers of these three mystical classics were the outstanding figures in that seventeenth century movement in France and Italy. Jeanne de la Motte Guyon 's dramatic and tragic life (1648-1717) is vividly described in her autobiography. Fenelon (1651-1715), Archbishop of Cambray and preceptor to the grandson of Louis XIV, was her friend and convert. Miguel de Molinos (1640-1697) was a Spanish priest who came to Rome where he secured the support of the Pope and a large following, almost revolutionizing the entire Roman sect.

The Jesuits, who persecuted them all, including murdering Molinos by repeated torture, derisively named the teachings of silence before the Lord, *Quietism*; because of the teachings that God is known only through the prayer of inward silence when all human thought and feeling is quieted. Quietism and Molinos, are still condemned to this day as heretical by the Roman sect. Beyond human understanding, the same sect defends the Inquisition that murdered Molinos, standing behind a verdict from a confession obtained under torture; never questioning the monstrosity of the most corrupt body in history to use the name of Christian. Let the verses below be sufficient conviction of their perfidy and unjust opposition to the soul's simple subjection to our Lord.

Be still, and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10

Be silent, all flesh before the Lord. Zech 2:13

This publication is excellent for building hope and for comfort in understanding the meditation process of silent prayer. These writings speak of **purity and the Kingdom of Heaven within us, and focus on the individual's meditations**. We have edited them where appropriate. You may have noticed, there is little written by George Fox on the meditation process. In addition to their at home meditations, the early Quakers waited on the Lord together, if not a word was spoken between themselves. Fox has little written on any individual meditation, rather his writings focused on the group meetings. See Meeting Formats for more information on how they met.

I caution the reader not to rely on these writings for a description of the ultimate goal: union with God and to enter the Kingdom of Heaven; for apparently these people **did not** advance spiritually as far as George Fox, to be translated into the Kingdom of Heaven and to live

there. Their lives don't speak to the power of the Holy Spirit using them to create a whole new body of believers, (as was Fox's 650,000 Quakers); instead, they were limited to influence within the Roman sect. They did not speak "from the presence of the Lord," nor did they say, "Hear the word of the Lord," as did Fox. If the tree is rotten from the inside, it cannot be reformed; the Roman sect they tried to reform, devoured them: murdering Molinos and forcing Fenelon and Guyon to compromise, which neutered them to insignificance. Guyon, Fenelon, and Molinos apparently even had disagreements between themselves, which proves they did not have the unity of the Spirit and the Bond of Peace, which the early Quakers enjoyed. Their time on earth overlapped with Fox, yet we see no trace of a communication with Fox or the Quakers. For certain they were all taught, to a point, by the Holy Spirit; but their writings should only be used for individual meditation guidelines and encouragement of the meditation process itself, not the authentication of the end result. Molinos, in particular, came further than the others, vastly reforming the Roman church, though not so much as to neutralize his eventual executioners, the Jesuits. Molinos refused to compromise in any way, and was tortured to death. Fenelon severely compromised his positions, allowed to live out his life as a priest in a remote village. After several imprisonments, Madame Guyon compromised, but to a lesser degree than Fenelon, to live under supervision of a priest in the countryside. Both Fenelon and Guyon never published again, nor made another public statement

In contrast, Fox, while severely imprisoned in his old age for traveling on Sunday and failure to swear, repeatedly refused the King's offered pardons; because he did not want to dishonor the Truth, believing that to accept a pardon would be an implied admission of wrong-doing. He stayed in harsh imprisonment, in very poor health, until he could be freed by lengthy legal process that quashed the basis of his imprisonment.

CAUTION!!! This little book was popularly carried by many Quakers in the 19th Century, of which precious few ever saw their salvation, which I suggest is because it is **long on the subject of silence, and very short on the subject of obedience. Obedience is the only way to make progress.** Yes you must be humble. Yes you must be silent. Yes you must listen. Yes you must hear - **but then, you must obey what you are commanded to do** - without hesitation, without backsliding - obey his commands and keep obeying. **Without obedience to commands heard, there will be no progress.** If you deny what he tells you about yourself, you make him a liar. His word then fails to take hold and be planted in your heart.

But if you believe him to speak the truth, if you believe him whom you hear speaking to be the Son of God, you will obey - and you will progress; you will progress to a sinless state; to witness purity, holiness, perfection, **being freed from even the desire to sin, destruction of the residual man of sin within one by the brightness of his coming, seeing your name written in the Book of Life, union with Christ and the Father, entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, seeing the Glory of God, yourself also appearing in glory, fellowship with past saints made perfect, and fellowship with the Father and Christ - an unmistakable salvation, clearly seen, clearly felt, clearly understood.** He that believes in the Son of God **has the witness in himself;** '1 John 5:10-12. 'and he that has the Son, has the Father' - to see the Son and the Father reigning in their hearts - the union.

PREFACE

While some, into whose hands this little treatise may fall, may receive it as a messenger of glad tidings, there will, doubtless, be others, who may not feel disposed to place much dependence on the simple manner here pointed out, of drawing near to their Creator; let such, however, not judge according to the appearance; but, laying aside all reasoning thereon in humility and simplicity make trial of it, and feel for themselves, whether what is herein stated will not prove to be more than an empty dream of imagination, or a cunningly devised fable. And, if they do this in sincerity of heart, they will soon have to acknowledge, to their great consolation, that these are indeed substantial, efficacious, and incontrovertible truths; and that this is the true way to **become purified** from our many defilements, to be instructed in heavenly mysteries, to taste of the wine of the kingdom, and to partake of that bread which nourishes up unto everlasting life.

1: THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN THE HEART OF MAN

It is certain from Scripture, that the Spirit of God dwells within us, that a "manifestation of this Spirit is given to us to profit withal," and that this is "the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world." This is the grace of God, which brings salvation, and which has appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts; we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. But we make too little account of this internal Teacher, which is the soul of our soul, and by which only we are able to form good thoughts and desires. God ceases not to reprove us for evil, and to influence us to that which is good; but the noises of the world without, and of our own, passions

within, deafen us and hinder us from hearing him.

We must retire from all outward objects, and silence all the desires and wandering imaginations of the mind; that in this profound silence of the whole soul, we may hearken to the ineffable voice of the Divine Teacher. We must listen with an attentive ear; for it is a still, small voice. It indeed can be a voice uttered in words as when a man talks to his friend; and it is a perception infused, a knowing without hearing a voice, or a combination of them both; all by the secret operations and influences of the Divine Spirit, insinuating to us obedience, patience, meekness, humility, and all the other Christian virtues, in a language perfectly intelligible to the attentive soul. *In addition he will tell you things about himself and give you words of encouragement. But his commands will never be incomplete, nor will they be vague; from Christ, the commands are always clear, gentle, direct, non-sarcastic or humorous, succinct, perfect. Anything less is from the other side. Christ never requires us to fill in the blanks with an incomplete sentence. His commands will always be complete. He also gives us visions. Like all his understandings, those from Him will be immediately and perfectly clear in meaning. There will be no need to interpret or guess - so immediately discard any that are not perfectly clear. Be patient; very, very patient - you will eventually hear.*

Christ said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock - if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in unto him, and sup with him and he with me." His knocks are the monitions of his Spirit; which touch us, and operate in us. And to attend to these monitions and follow them, is to open unto him.

He speaks in impenitent sinners; but these, engrossed in the eager pursuit of worldly pleasures, and the gratification of their evil passions, are not able to hear him. His word with them passes for a fable. But woe to those who receive their consolation in this life. The time will come when their vain joys shall be confounded.

He speaks in sinners who are in the way of conversion; these feel the remorse of their conscience, and these remorse are the voice of the Spirit, which upbraids them inwardly with their vices. When they are truly touched, they have no difficulty to comprehend the secret voice, for it is this that so pierces them to the quick. It is that two edged sword within them, of which Paul speaks, which goes even to the dividing of soul from itself: "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

He speaks in persons enlightened, learned, and whose life, outwardly regular, seems adorned with many virtues; but often these persons, full of themselves, and of their knowledge, give too much ear to themselves to listen to his teachings. God who seeks only to communicate himself, finds no place (so to speak) where to introduce himself into these souls that are so full of themselves, and so over-fed with their own wisdom and virtues. He hides his secrets from the wise and prudent, and reveals them to the low and simple; Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth! Because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." It is with the humble and childlike that he delights to dwell, and to disclose to them his ineffable secrets. It is these who are more peculiarly qualified for receiving in a greater measure the gift of faith; for, being willing that the pride of Reason should be laid in the dust, they obstruct not the entrance of his gift of their vain arguments; but believe with simplicity and confidence.

2: ON FAITH

There are two sorts or degrees of faith: the first is that by which the mind gives its assent to the truth of a thing on the testimony of another; the second is of a more exalted nature, being of Divine origin, and is a gift of the Holy Spirit. By the first, we believe in the existence of God, and in the truths which he has revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. It is an essential principle in the beginning of the spiritual path; for "he that comes to (seeks) God, must believe that He is God, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." And if we put our whole trust in him, and endeavor in all things to obey him, we shall be in a state of preparation for the reception of that true and living faith which is "the gift of God."

{Until you can hear the Spirit speak to you, you must do your best to follow the moral core of the law: don't steal, lie, covet, commit adultery, etc.; do for others what you would have them do for you; forgive wrongs done to you; liberally give to those in need. The moral law is your schoolmaster until you can hear the Lord speak to you. Paul speaks of faith *coming* to free us from the law as our schoolmaster. In Gal 5:18, he says: *if* (and when) you are led (prompted, ordered, commanded) by the Spirit, you are not under the law. So he has defined faith to *being in obedience to the Spirit's leading*. So faith is to follow the commands heard from the Spirit of God, from the Lord. This is a major clarification of the definition of faith, as Paul further tells us he preaches **the word of faith** which is **in our hearts and mouths**, and faith comes *by hearing the word*; and Jesus says, Blessed are those who *hear the word* of God and "keep" it, such "keeping" (to practice, obey), results

in the love of God perfected in a man: But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 1 John 2:5. So faith is to hear the word within, and believe it to be the Son of God speaking to you, and then to keep it [obey it, practice it], repeatedly — which yields the blessing of the perfected love of God within you, and you to be in Christ and God. Christendom would have you believe that hearing someone read the words of the Bible is hearing the word of God, and if you believe them, you are a "believer." But this only results in belief of a historical fact written in a book and faith in the words in a book. Yet Paul has just told us that faith comes from hearing *the word*, who is Jesus, which word is in our heart; so to have real faith, you must hear from within and believe whom you hear, to be the Son of God; and believe enough to completely obey him. For Jesus became the Author and Source of eternal **salvation to all those who heed and obey Him.** Heb 5:9.}

It is only by this faith that we shall be enabled to overcome all our spiritual enemies, and clearly to understand those mysteries which are incomprehensible to human reason; for faith, being born of God, cannot reason, therefore, must follow and submit to faith, not go before and control it.

It is by faith that; "being justified, we have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ." And when this precious gift has been granted to us, it produces within us hope, love, confidence, joy and holiness of heart. We shall then be enabled to feel an entire dependence on the goodness, power, justice, and mercy of God, and a confidence in his promises; as well as more fully to experience and comprehend the operations of his spirit on the mind.

Faith is an essential requisite for the proper performance of all our duties to the Supreme Being; indeed, without it we cannot possibly please him; neither should we ever be induced to seek him, or believe on the influence of his Holy Spirit on our souls. It is by faith that we are supported on our path to peace, and are enabled to persevere through the difficulties and besetments, which we may have to encounter on our way: it is through this holy principle that we suffer the pains of dryness, and want of consolation, without fainting; being thereby strengthened to "endure, as seeing him who is invisible." And it is only by faith that we can attain to the practice of true, inward, and spiritual prayer.

3: ON PRAYER

Prayer is an intercourse of the soul with God. It is not a work of the head but of the heart; which ought always to continue. It is the medium through which life and food are conveyed to the soul, and the channel through which the gifts and graces of the spirit flow and are communicated. Every secret aspiration of the soul to God is prayer: all therefore are capable of prayer, and are called to it, as all are capable of, and are called to salvation.

Paul has enjoined us to "pray without ceasing;" and Jesus said, "I say unto, all, watch and pray." Come then, all you who are thirsty, to these living waters; nor lose your precious moments in "hewing out cisterns that will not hold water." Come, ye famishing souls who find nothing around to eat; come, and you shall be fully satisfied. Come, you poor afflicted ones, who groan beneath your load of wretchedness and pain, and you shall find ease and comfort. Come, you sick, to your Physician, and be not fearful of approaching him because you are filled with diseases; expose them to his view and they shall be healed

Children draw near to your Father, and he will embrace you in the arms of love. Come, ye poor, stray, wandering sheep, return to your Shepherd. Come, you who have been seeking happiness in worldly pleasures and pursuits, but have failed to find the satisfaction you expected; come and learn how to be truly happy here, and eternally happy for the hereafter. Come, sinners, to your Savior. Come, you dull, ignorant, and illiterate; you who think yourselves the most incapable of prayer, are more peculiarly called and adaptable to prayer. Let all, without exception, come; for Christ has called all. You must however learn a species of prayer which may be exercised at all times, which does not obstruct outward employments, and which may be equally practiced by all ranks and conditions of men; by the poor as well as the rich, by the illiterate as well as the learned. It cannot, therefore, be a prayer of the head, but of the heart. It is a species of prayer which nothing can interrupt but irregular and disorderly affections. And though you may think yourselves ever so dull, and incapable of sublime attainments, yet, by prayer the possession and enjoyment of God is easily obtained; for he is more desirous to give himself to us than we can be to receive him. Prayer is the guide to perfection, and the sovereign good; it delivers us from every vice, and obtains for us every virtue: for the one great means to become perfect is to walk in the presence of Infinite Purity. He himself has said, "Walk in my presence, and be perfect." It is only by prayer that we are brought into, and maintained in his presence; and when once we have fully known him, and the sweetness of his love, we shall find it impossible to relish anything so much as Him.

4: ALL ARE CAPABLE OF ATTAINING TO INWARD AND SPIRITUAL PRAYER

If all were solicitous to pursue the spiritual path, shepherds, while they watched their flocks, might have the spirit of the primitive Christians, and the husbandman at the plough maintain a blessed intercourse with his Creator; the manufacturer, while he exhausted his outward man with labor, would be renewed in internal strength; every species of vice would shortly disappear, and all mankind become true followers of the good Shepherd. Oh, when once the heart is gained, how easily is all moral evil corrected! It is for this reason, that God, above all things, requires the heart. It is the conquest of the heart alone that can extirpate those dreadful vices which are so predominant among men; such as drunkenness, blasphemy, lewdness, envy, and theft. Christ would become the universal and peaceful Sovereign, and the hearts of all mankind would be wholly renewed.

The decay of interned piety is unquestionably the source of the various errors that have risen in the world; all of which would speedily be sapped and overthrown, were inward religion to be established. Oh, how inexpressibly great is the loss sustained by mankind, from the neglect of the interior!

Some excuse themselves by saying that this is a dangerous way; pleading the incapacity of simple persons to comprehend spiritual matters. But Isaiah said, "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." And where can be the danger of walking in the only true way, which is Christ? Of giving ourselves up to him, fixing our eye continually on him, placing all our confidence in his grace, and turning with all the strength of our souls to his pure love?

The simple, so far from being incapable of this perfection, are by their docility, innocence and humility; peculiarly adapted and qualified for its attainment; and as they are not accustomed to reasoning, they are less employed in speculations, less tenacious of their own opinions. Even from their want of learning, they submit more freely to the teachings of the Divine Spirit; whereas others, who are blinded by self-sufficiency and enslaved by prejudice, give great resistance to the operations of Grace.

We are told in Scripture that he gives understanding to the simple, and we are also assured that he cares for them: "The Lord preserves the simple." Christ said, "Allow little children to come to me, for of such is the Kingdom of heaven."

Site Editor's Comment: Unless you are converted and become as little child, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Mat 18:3. Mark! You cannot please God unless you have crucified your lusts and affections on the inward cross of self-denial. You must be restored to the innocence of a little child. You must be purified, to become as innocent as the day you were born. Otherwise, you will be banned from heaven. And, this can only be done by the grace of God's changing power, to purge the desires and pride from your heart by faith, making you fit for the company of heaven.

The simple and undisguised emotions of filial love are infinitely more expressive than the most studied language. The spirit of God needs none of our arrangements and methods: when it pleases him, he turns shepherds into prophets; and, so far from excluding any from the temple of prayer, he throws wide open the gates, that all may enter in; while wisdom cries, 'Who is simple, let him turn in here; as for him that wants understanding,' she says to him, 'Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled'.

To seek God in his heart, to think of him, to return to him whenever he finds he has wandered from him, and to do and suffer all things with a single eye to please him is the natural and ready process; it is leading the soul to the very source of Grace, in which is to found all that is necessary for sanctification.

O that all would at once put themselves into this way, that Christ's kingdom might be established in their hearts! For as it is the heart alone that can oppose his sovereignty, it is by the subjection of the heart that his sovereignty is most highly exalted. And since none can attain this blessed state, except those whom God himself leads and places in this blessed state, we do not pretend to introduce any into it, but only to point out the shortest and safest road that leads to it; pleading you not to be retarded in your progress by any external exercises; not to rest in the shadow instead of the substance. If the water of eternal life is shown to some thirsty souls, how inexpressibly, cruel would it be, confining them to a round of external forms, to prevent their approaching it, so that their longing shall never be satisfied, 'but they shall perish' with thirst!

O you blind and foolish men, who pride yourselves on science, wisdom, wit and power! How well do you verify what God has said, that his secrets are hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed to the little ones - the babes!

5: ON ATTAINING TO TRUE PRAYER

*The sort of prayer to which we have alluded is that of **inward silence**; where the soul, abstracted from all outward things, in holy stillness, humble reverence, and lively faith, **waits** patiently to feel the **Divine Presence**, and lively faith, and **waits** patiently to receive the precious influence of the*

Holy Spirit. And when you retire for this purpose, and should you frequent practice, you should consider yourselves as being placed in the Divine presence, looking with a single eye to him, resigning yourselves entirely into his hands, to receive from him whatsoever he may be pleased to dispense to you; calmly endeavoring, at the same time, to fix your minds in peace and silence; quitting all your own reasonings, and not willingly thinking on anything, how good and how profitable however it may appear to be. And should any vain thoughts present themselves, you should gently turn from them; and thus faithfully and patiently wait to feel the Divine presence.

If, while you are thus engaged, something of inward stillness, or a degree of the softening influence of the Divine Spirit, is mercifully granted you, you should prize these manifestations of the presence of God in your souls; and be carefully and, reverently attentive to it; being cautious, however, not to endeavor to increase them by your activity; for, by so doing, you will draw the mind off from that state of holy stillness and humble watchfulness, which you should be solicitous as much as possible to maintain; by fanning the flame there is danger of extinguishing it, and thus depriving the soul of that nourishment which was intended for it.

A lively sense of this presence will extricate us speedily from numberless mental wanderings, remove us far from external objects, and bring us near to that Almighty Power, which is to be found in our inmost center; which is the temple in which he dwells. And when we are thus fully turned inward, and warmly penetrated with a sense of his presence, we should in stillness and repose, with reverence, confidence, and love, wait for the blessed food of which we have tasted, to sink deep into the soul.

The prayer of inward silence is the easiest and most profitable path, because, with a simple view, or attention to God, the soul becomes like a humble supplicant before its Lord; or as a child that casts itself into the safe bosom of its mother. It is also the most secure, because it is abstracted from the operations of the imagination; which is often beguiled into extravagancies, and is easily bewildered and deceived; the soul being thereby deprived of its peace.

It will at first be difficult, from the habit the mind will have acquired of being always from home, roving here and there, and from subject to subject, to restrain it, and free it from those wanderings which are an impediment to prayer. Indeed those wanderings of the imagination, with which beginners are for some time tried, are permitted in order to prove their faith, exercise their patience, and to show them how little they can perform of themselves; as well as to teach them to depend upon an Almighty Power alone for strength to overcome all their difficulties; "for by (his own) strength shall no man prevail;" and if they place all their hope in him, and faithfully persevere, every obstacle will be gradually removed, and they will find that they will be enabled to approach him with facility, and that inward silence is not only attended with much less difficulty, but at times will be found to be easy, sweet, and delightful. They will know that this is the true way of finding God; and feel "his name to be as ointment poured forth."

And although we should at all times be very watchful and diligent in recalling our wandering thoughts, restraining them, as much as may be, in due subjection; yet a direct contest with them only serves to augment and irritate them; whereas, by calling to mind that we are in the Divine presence, and endeavoring to sink down under a sense and perception thereof, simply turning inwards, we wage insensibly a very advantageous, though indirect, war with them.

Those who have not learned to read are not, on that account, excluded from prayer; for the great Teacher who teaches all things is Christ himself. They should learn this fundamental rule, that "the kingdom of God is within them;" and only there it must be sought.

"The kingdom of God is within and does not come with outward signs," said the blessed Jesus: Abandon, therefore, the cares and pleasures of this world and turn to the Lord with the whole heart and the soul shall find rest. If we withdraw our attention from outward things, and keep it fixed on the internal Teacher, endeavoring to obey him in whatever he may require of us, we will soon perceive the coming of the kingdom of God for the kingdom of God is that "peace and joy in the Holy Spirit;" which cannot be received by sensual and worldly men.

It is for want of inward retirement, and prayer, that our lives are so imperfect, and that we are neither penetrated nor warmed with the divine light of truth, Christ the light. We should therefore be in the daily practice of it; and there are none so much occupied, as to not be able to find time for inward retirement. The less we practice silent prayer, the less desire we have for it; for our minds, being set upon outward things, we contract at last such habit, that it is very hard to turn them inward.

Excerpts from the Site Editor's Meditation Guidelines are interspersed for clarification and added understanding:

It is probably best to pick a time in the early morning; when it is quiet, before you have the day's activities swirling in you head. Get up an hour earlier than you previously did; use weekends for

intense seeking, and make ourselves holy days, by spending the whole day or as much as possible in meditations. If you're not a morning person, meditate at night; my wife was like this and could meditate for several hours at night. Myself, I was the opposite; good in the morning, sleepy in the evening. When you get more of his Spirit, you can meditate any time without too much difficulty. Just do what works for you, but do it regularly. It is best to meditate in a chair without a head rest. Sitting up straight, you have less possibility of falling asleep, though still possible; and he can more easily awaken you, because any sleep fallen into will not be as deep as would be in bed lying down. If you try to meditate propped up on pillows in bed, it is far too easy to slink down or just roll over into a laying down position.

Of course, make whatever time you choose a daily habit. And if you get awakened in the night, know it is probably God, summoning you to come to him then. **Pay close attention when awakening in the morning; you will often get a single statement from Him at this time.**

I have also noticed that it helps to focus on feeling the right side of your body, head, hand, etc. It slows the thoughts down. This is a technique, from ancient Jewish meditations, where they tied phylacteries on their forehead and right wrist before meditation to help their concentration. I get much more quietness when I focus alternating between my right hand and the top right side of my head, and even when I shift my eyes to the right side. When you are swirling in thoughts, try it. It might work for you; but **there is no one way**. Just sit quietly as best you can.

And of course, start by thinking on the name of Christ. As you progress, you can shift to thinking on Christ within you. (*per George Fox*)

To sometimes sit and hear or see nothing is part of the process, dryness. For long periods of time, I got one message per month. It will get better. You will also get encouragement. This comes just at the right time. He is trying to develop patience. He is developing faith; he speaks at exactly the right time. He knows what is best. Don't second guess Him. He is always there. He will never leave you; this is a scriptural promise. Long periods of hearing nothing are being in the spiritual desert. He told me once "keep crawling through the desert." Don't think the process is not working; know it is. Read John, Peter, Psalms, and George Fox for keeping up your hope. You will find your favorites. Whatever builds your hope, read it.

Eventually you will hear Him. He has a soft voice; that is why it is written, "Be still and know that I am God." He will tell you things about Himself. He will encourage you. He is kindness. He will tell or show you things about yourself; some will be things that are ugly. But since he is your friend, you know that he is showing them to you for your own good. So you listen and watch. And you don't run; stand before the Son of Man. And you repent of what he shows you. And sometimes he gives you commands. You are hearing the Word of God, the living Word. And hopefully you will obey his commands and show him you love him by being obedient. Keep pen and paper nearby when meditating. Stop and write down those you get. Then go right back into meditation. Review them periodically, and keep repenting.

When meditating, and you see something ugly about yourself, don't draw back; realize it is the Light Christ showing you your condition, and He is doing this to help you be rid of it and to become a better person; and that Christ has died for you so that you need not panic and draw away, but remain to focus on the Light that shows you your condition. And then, just when you don't expect it, strength will come; and whatever you have been shown, you will have strength to be different from then on.

This meditation process is the mystical missing cross of christianity. Christ told us what we must do to follow him: "you must pick up your cross and follow me daily;" and "he who does not bear his cross cannot be my disciple." With the cross there is increasing peace, love, holiness, Holy Spirit, and death of self. Without the cross, there is only the old man of flesh and ego with dullness and disillusionment. No cross, no death, no rebirth.

"The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him." The silence of all our earthly thoughts and desires is absolutely indispensable, if we would hear the secret voice of the Divine Instructor. Hearing is a sense formed to receive sounds, and is rather passive than active, admitting, but not communicating, sensation: and if we would hear, we must lend the ear for that purpose; so, Christ the Eternal Word, without whose divine internal speaking the soul is dead, dark, and barren, when he would speak within us, requires the most silent attention to his all-quickenning and efficacious voice.

We should forget ourselves and all self-interest, and listen and be attentive to the inward voice. Outward silence is very requisite for the cultivation and improvement of inward; and, indeed, it is impossible we should become internal, without the love and practice of outward silence and retirement.

And unquestionably our being thus internally engaged is wholly incompatible with being busied,

and employed by the numerous trifles that surround us. When inactivity or unfaithfulness we become dissipated, or as it were uncentered, it is of immediate importance to turn again gently and peacefully inward; and thus we may learn to preserve the spirit and unction of prayer throughout the day; for if the prayer of inward silence were wholly confined to any appointed hour we should reap but little fruit.

It is of greatest importance for the soul to go to prayer with confidence, [but with the humility of a sinner]; and such a pure and disinterested love, as seeks nothing from the Father, but the ability to please him, and to do his will: for a child who only proportions his diligence to his hope of reward, renders himself unworthy of all reward. Go then, to prayer, not that you may enjoy spiritual delights, but that you may be full or empty, just as it pleases God. This will preserve you in an evenness of spirit, either in desertion or in consolation, and will prevent your being surprised at dryness, or the apparent repulses of him who is altogether love.

Strive then not to allow your minds to be too much entangled with outward things, endeavoring to be totally resigned to the Divine Will; that God may do with you and yours according to his heavenly pleasure relying on him as on a kind and loving father; and though you be taken up with your outward affairs, and your minds thereby prevented from being actually fixed on him, even then you will always carry a fire about you that will never go out; but which, on the contrary, will nourish a secret prayer, that will be like a lamp continually lit before the throne of God.

A son who loves his father does not always think distinctly of him; many objects draw away his mind, but these never interrupt the filial love; whenever his father returns into his thoughts, he loves him and he feels, in the very inmost of his heart, that he has never discontinued one moment to love him, though he has ceased to think of him. In this manner should we love our heavenly Father. It is by coming under the influence of the Divine Spirit that we are enabled to call God Father, and that we can indeed become his sons.

True religion is a heaven-born thing, it is an emanation of the truth and goodness of God upon the spirits of men, whereby they are formed into a similitude and likeness of Him, and become "partakers of the Divine nature." A true Christian is every way of a most noble extraction, of a heavenly and divine pedigree, being born, as John expressed it, "from above." And in another place he said, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

If considerations such as these are not sufficient to convince us of the folly of our attachment to perishing things, and to stimulate us to press after those which obtain for us such great and glorious privileges; we must, indeed, be sunk into a state of deep and deplorable insensibility; out of which, even "if one were to rise from the dead" for that purpose, it would be impossible to arouse us.

6: ON SPIRITUAL DRYNESS

No sooner shall we have given ourselves up to serve the Lord in this inward way than he will begin to purify us and try our faith, in order to draw us nearer to himself. And, for this purpose, he will lead us through the paths of dryness and desertion; so that, when we endeavor to fix our minds in silence, in order to feel after our God, we will not experience the comfort and refreshment we expected; but, on the contrary, will be more than usually beset with a multitude of troublesome and importunate imaginations; insomuch, that we shall begin to think that we labor to no purpose, and that the prayer of internal silence is an attainment to which we need not aspire, seeing that our imagination is so ungovernable, and our minds so void of good. But this state of dryness is very profitable, if it be suffered with patience.

The Lord makes use of the veil of dryness, to the end we, may not know what he is working in us, and so we may be humble; because if we felt, and knew, what he was working in our souls, satisfaction and presumption would get in; we should imagine we were doing some good thing; and this self-complacency would prevent our spiritual advancement.

And through the prayer of mental stillness, we may feel ourselves to be in a dry and comfortless state, not being able to get rid of our troublesome thoughts, nor experience any light, consolation, or spiritual feeling; yet let us not be afflicted, nor desist from our undertaking; but resign ourselves at that time with vigor, and patiently persevere in that manner, our souls will be internally improved.

We need not believe that when we come from prayer in the same manner as we began it, without feeling, ourselves profited thereby, that we have been toiling in vain. True prayer consists, not in enjoying the light, and having knowledge of spiritual things, but in enduring with patience, and persevering in faith and silence; believing that we are in the lord's presence, turning to him our hearts with tranquility and simplicity of mind.

We must be aware that nature is always an enemy to the spirit; and that when it is deprived of sensible pleasures; it remains weak, melancholy, and full of irksomeness. Hence, from the uneasiness of thoughts, the lassitude of body, importunate sleep, and our inability to curb the senses, every one of which would follow its, own pleasure, we will often feel impatient again to mingle in the concerns of time. Happy are we if we can persevere, amidst this desert experience! Remember, that "they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

The prayer of internal silence may be well typified by the wrestling, which the Scriptures say the patriarch Jacob had all night with God until, the day broke and he blessed him. Wherefore, the soul is to persevere, and wrestle with the difficulties that it will meet with in inward prayer without desisting, until the Son Of Internal LIGHT begins to appear, and the Lord gives it his blessing. *The editors greatest progress was three straight all night sessions with much coffee over a four day Thanksgiving holiday period.*

If you go to prayer with the spirit and intention of praying, so long as you retract not that intention, although, through misery and frailty, your thoughts may wander, you will in due time, see Almighty Power help you overcome your allow's affections and lusts. Distrust him not, therefore, but only yourselves; and remember that, as the Apostle said, "He is the father of mercies, and God of all comforts." His comforts are sometimes withdrawn, but his mercies endure forever.

Be of good courage, then, and though it may seem to you that you toil without gaining much advantage, yet you remember that we must plough and sow before we can reap; and if you persevere in faith and patience, you will reap an abundant reward for all your labors. Would you be so unreasonable as to expect to find without seeking; or for it to be opened to you without taking the pains to knock? As well might the husbandman might expect to see his fields waving with grain, without his having been at the trouble to put the seed in the ground.

It is no hard matter to adhere to God while you are in the enjoyment of his comforts and consolations; but if you would prove your fidelity to him, you must be willing to follow him through the paths of dryness and desertion. The truth of a friend is not known while he is receiving favors and benefits; but if he remain faithful to us when we treat him with coldness and neglect, it will be proof of the sincerity of his attachment.

Though Almighty Goodness has no other desire than to impart himself to those that love and seek him, yet he frequently conceals himself from us, that we may be roused from sloth, and induced to seek him with fidelity and love. But, with what abundant goodness does he recompense our faithfulness! And how sweetly are these apparent withdrawals of himself succeeded by the consolations of his love! David said, "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he has put a new song in my mouth; even praise unto our God."

In seasons of the withdrawals of his presence, we are apt to believe that it will be a proof of our fidelity, and evidenced by the ardor of our love, to seek him by an exertion of our own strength and activity; and that this exertion will induce him the more speedily to return. But this is not the right procedure when we are in this state: with patient resignation, with affection, and with reverential silence, we must wait the return of our beloved. Thus only we shall demonstrate that we seek nothing but himself, and his good pleasure; and not the selfish delights of our own sensations.

It is very common for us, when we feel the sweetness of the grace of God, to fancy that we love him; but it is only in the withdrawals of his presence that our love can be tried, and the measure of it known. It is at these seasons that we are convinced of the weakness and misery of our nature, and how incapable we are, of ourselves, to think or do any good. There are many who, when they experience meltings of heart, shedding of tears, and other sensible delights, imagine that they are favorites of the Almighty, and that then they truly possess him; and so pass all their lives in seeking after those pleasurable sensations. But they should be cautious for fear that they deceive themselves, for these consolations, when they proceed from nature, and are occasioned by their own reflections, or self-admirings, hinder them from discerning the true light, or making steps towards, perfection. You should therefore be attentive to distinguish those meltings of the affections from the operations which purely proceed from the Divine Spirit; leaving yourselves to be led forward by him, who will be your light in the midst of darkness and dryness.

It is of no small advantage, patiently to suffer the want of consolation, and the trouble and importunities of a wandering imagination: it is an offering and sacrifice. And as many times as you exercise yourselves, calmly to reject your vain thoughts, and peacefully to endure your dark and desolate state,

so many crowns will the Lord set upon your heads.

It is of great importance that you endeavor, at all times to keep your hearts in peace; that you may keep pure that temple of God. The way to keep it in peace is to enter into it by means of inward silence. When you see yourselves more sharply assaulted, retreat into that region of peace; and you will find a fortress that will enable you to triumph over your enemies, visible and invisible, and over all their snares and temptations. Within your own soul resides divine aid, and sovereign succor. Retreat within it, and all will be quiet, secure, peaceable, and calm. Thus, by means of mental silence, which can only be attained by divine help, you may look for tranquillity in tumult; solitude in company, light in darkness; forgetfulness in pressures; vigor in despondency; courage in fear; resistance in temptation; peace in war; and quiet in tribulation.

7: ON DEFECTS AND INFIRMITIES

Should we so far get off our guard, as again to wander among externals in search of happiness, or sink into dissipation, or commit a fault, we must instantly turn inward; for having departed thereby from our God, we should as soon as possible return unto him, and patiently suffer whatever sensations he is pleased to impress: for he has declared, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

On the commission of a fault, it is of great importance to guard against vexation and disquietude, which spring from a secret root of pride, and a love of our own excellence; we are hurt by feeling what we are; and if we discourage ourselves, or despond, we are the more enfeebled; and from our reflections on the fault, a chagrin arises, which is often worse than the fault itself.

The truly humble soul is not surprised at its defects or failings; and the more miserable and wretched it beholds itself, the more does it abandon itself unto God, and press for nearer and more intimate alliance with him, that it may avail itself of an eternal strength. We should the rather be induced to act thus, as he himself has said: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you shall go: I will guide you with my eye."

8. ON TEMPTATIONS AND TRIBULATIONS

We are at times so base, proud, and ambitious; and so full of our own appetites, our own judgment and opinions, that if temptations and tribulations were not permitted to try, humble and purify us, we should never arrive at a state of acceptance.

The Lord, seeing our misery, and perverse inclinations, and being thereby moved to compassion, withdraws his strength from us, that we may feel our own weakness; suffering us to be assaulted by violent and painful suggestions of impatience and pride, and various other temptations; and some, who have long been in the practice of sin, by gluttony, luxury, rage, swearing, despair; and a great many other besetments; in order that they may know themselves, and be humble. With the temptations, Infinite Goodness humbles our pride giving us, in that, the most wholesome medicine.

"All our righteousness," as Isaiah said, "are as filthy rags;" through the vanity, conceitedness, and self-love, with which they are defiled. It is, therefore, necessary that they should be purified with the fire of temptation and tribulation; that so they may be clean, pure, perfect, and acceptable in the sight of God.

The Lord polishes the soul which he draws to himself, with the rough file of temptation; freeing it thereby from the rust of many evil passions and propensities. By means of temptation and tribulation he humbles, subjects, and exercises it; showing it its own misery. It is thus that he purifies and strips the heart, in order that all its operations may be pure, and of inestimable value.

Oh, how happy would you be, if you could quietly believe that all the trials and temptations, with which you are assaulted, are permitted for your gain and spiritual profit!

But you will perhaps say that when you are molested by others, or wronged and injured by your neighbor, that this cannot be for your spiritual advantage; seeing that it is the effect of their faults and malice. This is no other than a cunning and hidden device of the enemy; because, though God wills not the sin of another, yet he wills his own effects in you; and the trouble which accrues to you from another's fault should improve you by increasing your patience, and exercising your forbearance and charity.

Consider, how the Lord makes use of the faults of others for the good of your souls. Oh, the greatness of the divine wisdom! Who can pry into the depth of the secret and extraordinary means, and the hidden ways, whereby he guides the soul which he desires to purge, transform, and dignify?

It is often the greatest temptation to be without temptation; because we are then most liable to fall into a state of lukewarmness; therefore we ought not to repine when it assaults us; but with resignation, peace, and constancy, shut our hearts against it. If we would serve God; and arrive at the sublime region of internal peace, we must pass through this rugged path of temptation and tribulation; and therein become polished, purged; renewed and purified.

A direct contest and struggle with temptations rather serves to augment them; and withdraws the soul from that adherence to God, which it should ever be its principal occupation to strive after and maintain. The surest and safest method of conquest is simply to turn away from the evil, and draw yet nearer and closer to our Sure Refuge: a little child, on perceiving a monster, does not wait to fight with it, and will scarcely turn its eyes towards it; but quickly shrinks into the bosom of its mother, in total confidence of safety: so, likewise, should the soul turn from the dangers of temptation to its God. "God is in the midst of her," said the psalmist, "she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early." The name of the Lord is a strong tower, to which the righteous flee and are safe.

If we do otherwise, and in our weakness attempt to attack our enemies, we shall frequently feel ourselves wounded, if not totally defeated: but, by casting ourselves into the presence of God, and relying solely on him, we shall find supplies of strength for our support. This was the succor sought for by David: "I have set" said he, "the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore, my heart is glad and my glory rejoices: my flesh, also, shall rest in hope." And, it is said in Exodus, "The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

Although "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any man;" yet it is evident that temptations are permitted for our good, and, if rightly endured, tend to our refinement; "therefore, count it all joy, when you fall into various temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience." And in all our besetments, however painful they may feel to us, or of whatever nature they may be, we should remember that it is said, "Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him."

You cannot be hurt by men or devils, if you keep always near to God: for, "who is he that will harm you, if you are followers of that which is good." But if you are hurt, it is your pride, your passions, and your many unsubdued evil propensities, that rise up and injure you; and as long as these remain, the enemy will make use of you, and seek to draw your minds away from adherence to an all sufficient Preserver.

"Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Therefore, know your own state, and the need you have to be purified by means of temptation, and keep always on the watch, lest the unwearied enemy gain access to your souls by his insinuations and pleasing allurements, which he will suit to your present situation and condition: for, in your passage through life, there are many things which he will offer you as temptations; endeavoring to produce in you an inordinate inclination and desire for them; which if you give way to while you are in this manner tempted, great will be the danger of your being wholly overcome.

If the malignant enemy is not resisted in his first attack, he enters by gradual advances, and takes entire possession of the heart: and so long as opposition is deferred by habitual negligence, the power of opposing becomes every day less, and the strength of the adversary proportionally greater. Therefore, when you feel in yourselves a strong and eager desire after anything whatsoever, and find your inclinations carry you too precipitately to do it, strive to moderate yourselves by retreating inward, and seeking after tranquility of mind. To do all things well, we must do them as in the Divine presence, otherwise we shall soon get off our right center, and be in danger of being wholly overthrown.

Oh blessed soul! If you would but be content and quiet the fire of temptation and tribulation, and allow yourself to be fully proved and tried, in patiently enduring the assaults of the enemy and the desertion of the heavenly good, how soon would you find yourself rich in celestial pleasures! How soon would the divine bounty make a rich throne in your soul, and a goodly home for you to refresh and find solitude for yourself inside. Know, that although the Lord may for a season visit, yet he only takes up his home in peaceful souls; and those in whom the fire of temptation and tribulation have consumed all their corrupt propensities; the Lord reposes himself not just anywhere, but where quietness reigns, and self love is banished.

If from chaos, his omnipotence has produced so many wonders in the creation of the world, what will he not do in your soul, created in his own image and likeness, if you keep constant, quiet, and resigned, with a true sense of your own nothingness?

"Cast not, therefore, away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward," but keep constant; O blessed soul! Keep constant, for it will not be as you imagined; nor are you at any time nearer to God, than in such times of desertion, and trial of your faith; for although the sun is hid in the clouds, yet it changes not its place, nor loses any part of its brightness. The Lord permits you painful temptations and desertions to polish, to cleanse and disrobe of self; that you may become of these trials entirely his,

and give yourself up to wholly serve him.

Oh, how much is there to be purified in a soul that must arrive at the holy mountain of perfection, and of transformation with God! For while any portion of evil, anything of self, remains in us, we must be subject to temptation. When self is annihilated, there is nothing left for the tempter to act on. Oh how resigned, naked, denied, annihilated, ought the soul to be, that would not hinder the entrance of the divine Lord, nor has continual communion with it.

9: ON SELF-DENIAL

He who expects to arrive at perfection, or a union of the soul with God, by means of consolation or comfort, will find himself mistaken. For, having sinned, we must expect to suffer, and in some measure be purified, before we can in any degree fitted for a union with God, or permitted to taste of the joy of his presence.

Therefore be patient under all the sufferings the Father is pleased to bring your way. If your love to him is pure, you will not seek him less in suffering than in consolation. Be not like those, who give themselves to him at one season, and withdraw the next. They give themselves only to be caressed; and wrest themselves back again, when they come to be crucified; or at least turn to the world for consolation.

No, you will not find consolation in anything but a free and full surrender to the Divine will. Who savor not the cross, savor not the things that are of God; and a heart that savors the cross finds the bitter things to be sweet: "to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

We may be assured, that there is an internal advancement, where there is an advancement in the way of submission to the cross.

As soon as anything presents itself as a suffering, and you feel a repugnance against it, resign yourselves immediately unto God with respect to it, giving yourselves up to him in sacrifice; and you will find that, when the cross arrives, it win not be so very burdensome, because you had disposed yourselves to a willing reception of it. Jesus himself was willing to suffer its utmost rigors. We often bear the cross in weakness, at other times in strength; all should be equal to us in the will of God.

If any other way but bearing the cross, and dying to his own will, could have redeemed man from a fallen and corrupt state, Jesus would have taught it, and established it by his example. But of all that desire to follow him, he has required the bearing of the cross; and without exception has said to all; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Why then do you fear to take up the cross, which will direct you to the path which leads to the kingdom of God?

From the cross are derived heavenly meekness, true fortitude, the joys of the spirit, the conquest of self, the perfection of holiness! There is no redemption, no hope of the continuation of the divine life in us, but by our taking up the cross to our carnal appetites and inclinations: for all consists in the death of self, and there is no means to obtain life and peace, but by thus dying to corruption.

Why do you seek any other path to glory, but that in which you are called to follow the "Captain of your Salvation?" His life was a continual cross, and do you desire a perpetuity of repose and joy? The more perfectly you die to yourselves, the more truly will you begin to live to God; if you would then enjoy true peace here, and obtain hereafter the unfading crown of glory, it is necessary that in every place, and in all events, you should bear the cross willingly. To suffer, therefore, is your portion; and to suffer patiently, and willingly, is the great testimony of your love and allegiance to your Lord.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, **arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.** As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ¹ Pet 4:1-2.

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that **you should follow His steps.** ¹ Pet 2:21.

Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in that way. But **the gate is narrow (contracted by pressure)** and the way is straitened and **compressed that leads away to life, and few are those who find it.** ^{Mat} 7:14. (Tribulation and suffering is the pressure; as you approach the gate, the pressure intensifies).

Do not think it **strange** the **fiery ordeal** you are undergoing, but **rejoice that you are participating in the sufferings of Christ**, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is **revealed.** ¹ Peter 4:12-13. The same sufferings are being experienced by all your brothers in the world. ¹ Pet 5:9.

¹ Pet 5:9.

For the Lord corrects and **disciplines everyone whom He loves**, and He punishes, even **scourges, every son whom He accepts** and welcomes to His heart and cherishes...You must submit to and endure [correction] for discipline; God is dealing with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not [thus] train and correct and discipline. Now **if you are exempt from correction and left without discipline** in which **all** [of God's children] share, then **you are illegitimate offspring and not true sons.** Heb 12:6-8.

The patient enduring of the cross, and the death of self upon it, are the indispensable duty of fallen man; and it is thus only he can be delivered from his darkness, corruption and misery, and be restored to the possession of life, light, and peace.

Knowing then the excellencies of the Father's love, having no other desire but that of ardently reaching after him, of dwelling ever with him, and of sinking into nothingness before him, we should accept indiscriminately all his dispensations, whether obscurity or illumination, fruitfulness or barrenness, weakness or strength, sweetness bitterness, or temptations; wanderings, pain, weariness, or doubts; and none of all these should retard our course.

10: ON MORTIFICATION

All endeavors merely to rectify the exterior, impel the soul yet farther outward into that about which it is so warmly and zealously engaged; and thus its powers are diffused and scattered abroad; for its application being immediately directed to externals it thus invigorates those very things it is aiming to subdue.

This species of mortification can never subdue passions, or lessen their activity. The only method to affect this is inward silence; by which the soul is turned wholly and altogether inward, to possess a present God. If it direct all its vigor and energy towards this center of its being, the simple act separates and withdraws it from the senses; the exercising of all its powers internally leaves the senses faint and impotent; and the nearer it draws to God, the farther it is separated from the senses, and the less are the passions influenced by them.

In mortification of the eye and ear, which continually supply the busy imagination with new subjects, there is little danger of falling into excess: we have only to follow where the divine Spirit guides.

The soul has double advantage by proceeding thus: for, in withdrawing from outward objects, it draws the nearer to God; and the nearer its approaches are made to him, besides the secret sustaining power and virtue it receives, it is farther removed from sin; so that, at length, to have the mind turned inward, becomes, as it were, habitual.

11: ON RESIGNATION

We should give up our whole existence unto God, from the strong and positive conviction, that while we are faithfully endeavoring to follow him, the occurrence of every moment is agreeable to his immediate will and permission, and just such as our state requires. This conviction will make us resigned in all things; and accepting of all that happens, not as from the creature, but as from himself.

But I entreat you, who sincerely wish to give up yourself to God, that after you have made the donation, you will not snatch yourselves back again: remember, a gift, once presented, is no longer at the disposal of the donor. Resignation is a matter of the greatest importance in our progress; it is the key to the inner court; so that whoever knows truly how to resign himself, soon becomes perfect: we must, therefore, continue steadfast and immovable therein; and not listen to the voice of natural reason. Great faith produces great resignation; we must confide in God, hoping against hope.

Resignation is casting off all selfish care, that we may be altogether at the Divine disposal. All Christians are exhorted to resignation; for it is said to all, be not anxious for tomorrow; for your heavenly Father knows all that is necessary for you. "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths." "Commit your works unto the lord, and your thoughts shall be established." "Commit your way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgments as the noonday."

This virtue is practiced by continually losing our own will in the will of God; by being resigned in all things, leaving what is past, in oblivion, what is to come, after having faithfully done our part, to his direction, and devoting the present moment to him, by attributing nothing that befalls us to the creature, but regarding all things as in his ordering, and looking upon all, excepting only our sins,

as infallibly proceeding from him. Surrender yourselves, then, to be led and disposed of, just as he pleases.

We must willingly cooperate with, and second, the designs of God, which tend to divest us of all our own operations, that in the place thereof his may be instituted. Let this, then, be done in you; and allow not yourselves to be attached to anything, however good it may appear; for it is no longer good, if in any measure turns you aside from that which God wills of you.

The Divine will is preferable to all things. And it is our conformity to this yoke that introduces us into the regions of internal peace. Hence, we may know that the rebellion of our will is the chief occasion of all our disquiet, and that this is the cause why we suffer so many straits and perturbations. ***Oh! If we did but submit our wills to the Divine will, and to all its disposals, what tranquility should we feel! What sweet peace! What inward serenity! What supreme felicity and foretastes of blessedness! Let us shake off, then, all attachment to the interests of self, and live on faith and resignation alone.***

12: ON VIRTUE

It is thus that we acquire virtue with facility and certainty; for as God is the fountain and principle of all virtue, in proportion as we approach to the possession of him; in like proportion do we rise into the most eminent virtues. Indeed, he that has God, has all things; and he that has him not, has nothing. All virtue is but as a mask, an outside appearance, mutable as our garments, if it does not spring up from this divine source; and then, indeed, it is genuine, essential, and permanent. "The King's daughter," said David, "is all glorious within."

13: ON CONVERSION

"Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" "Turn you to him from whom, you have revolted." To be truly converted is to avert wholly from the creature, and turn wholly unto the Creator.

For the attainment of salvation, it is absolutely necessary that we should forsake outward sin, and turn unto righteousness: but this alone is not perfect conversion, which consists in a total change of the whole man, from an outward to an inward life.

When the soul is once turned to God, it finds a wonderful facility in continuing steadfast in its conversion; and the longer it remains thus converted, the nearer it approaches, and the more firmly it adheres to God; and the nearer it draws to him, of necessity, the farther it is removed from that spirit, which is contrary to him: thus the soul is so effectually established and rooted in its conversion, that in some measure it is natural to it.

Now, we must not suppose that this is effected by a violent exertion of its own powers; for the soul is not capable of, nor should it attempt, any other cooperation with Divine grace, than that of *endeavoring to withdraw itself from external objects*, and to turn inward: after which, it has nothing further to do, than to continue steadfast in its adherence to God.

He has an attractive virtue, which draws the soul more and more powerfully to himself the nearer it approaches toward him, and in attracting, he purifies and refines it; just as it is with a gross vapor exhaled by the sun, which, as it gradually ascends is rarified and rendered pure: the vapor, indeed, contributes to its exhalation only by its passiveness; but the soul cooperates with the attraction of Purity, by a free and affectionate correspondence. This turning of the mind inward is eventually both easy and efficient, advancing the soul naturally, and without constraint, because God himself is the center which attracts it.

All our care and attention should therefore be to acquire inward silence: nor let us be discouraged by the pains and difficulties we encounter in this exercise, which will soon be recompensed by such abundant supplies of Divine strength as will render the exercise perfectly easy, provided we are faithful in meekly withdrawing our hearts from outward objects and gratifications, and returning to our center, with affections full of tenderness and serenity. When at any time the passions are turbulent, a gentle retreat inward to a present God easily deadens and pacifies them; and any other way of contending with them, rather irritates than appeases them. Divine Power, in time past, instantly calmed a boisterous and raging sea; and can we now doubt, if we sincerely apply to him in our distress, that he will still the tumults of the agitated soul?

14: ON SELF ANNIHILATION

The soul fitted for union with God, by giving up self to the destroying and annihilating power of Divine love. This, in deed, is a most essential and necessary sacrifice in the Christian religion, and that only by which we can pay true homage to the sovereignty of God. By the subjection of self within us, we truly acknowledge the supreme existence of God; for unless we cease to exist to self, the spirit of the Eternal word cannot exist in us. Now it is by the giving up of our own life, that we give place for his coming; and, in dying to ourselves, he himself lives and abides in us.

We should, indeed, surrender our whole being unto Christ; and cease to live any longer in ourselves, we are lost in him; and this can be effected only by the annihilation of self, which being the true prayer of adoration, renders unto "God, and unto the Lamb, blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, forever and ever."

This is the prayer of truth: it is "**worshipping God is spirit and truth**" because we here come to know the Spirit to help our infirmities, and make intercession for us; and being thus influenced by the pure spirit of God, we are thereby drawn forth and freed from our own carnal and corrupt manner of praying. We can pay due honor to the Almighty only in our own annihilation which is no sooner accomplished, than he, who never suffers a void in nature, instantly fills us with himself.

Did we but know the virtues and the blessings which the soul derives from this species of prayer, we should willingly be employed therein without ceasing. It is the pearl of great price; it is the hidden treasure; which Jesus assured us that the "kingdom of God is within us;" and this is true in two senses: first, God becomes so fully the Master and Lord in us, that nothing resists his dominion: then is our interior his kingdom. And again, when we possess God, who is the supreme good, we possess his kingdom also, where there is fullness of joy, and where we attain the end our creation. The end of our creation, indeed, is to enjoy our God, even in this life; but, alas! How few there are who ever come to know the pure joy which his presence gives.

15. MAN ACTS MORE NOBLY UNDER THE DIVINE INFLUENCE, THAN HE CAN POSSIBLY DO BY FOLLOWING HIS OWN WILL

Some persons, when they hear of the prayer of silence, falsely imagine that the soul remains dead and inactive; but unquestionably it acts more nobly and more extensively than it ever has done before; for God himself is the mover, and it now acts by the agency of his spirit. When Paul speaks of our being led by the Spirit of God, it is not meant that we should cease from action; but that we should act through the internal agency of his grace. This is finely represented by the power by the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the wheels which had a living spirit; and wherever the Spirit was to go, they went, they ascended and descended, as they were moved; for the Spirit of life was in them, and they turned not where they went. Thus the soul should be equally subservient to the will of that vivifying spirit with which it is enlightened, and scrupulously faithful to follow only where it moves. Our activity should, therefore, consist in endeavoring to acquire and maintain such a state as may be most susceptible of divine impressions, most flexible to all the operations of the Eternal Word.

While a tablet is unsteady, the painter is unable to delineate a true copy: so every act of our own selfish spirit is productive of false and erroneous lineaments; it interrupts the work, and defeats the design, of this adorable painter: we must then remain in peace, and move only when he moves us. Jesus Christ has the life in himself, and this is the life of every living soul.

As all action is estimable only in proportion to the dignity of the efficient principle, this action is incontestably more noble than any other. Actions produced by a divine principle are divine; but creaturely actions, however good they may appear, are only human. Christ, the word, has the life in himself: and being communicative of his nature, he desires to communicate it to man. We should therefore make room for the influx of this life, which can only be done by ejection of the fallen nature, and the suppression of the activity of self. This is agreeable to the assertion of Paul: "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new!" But this state can be accomplished only by dying to ourselves, and to all our own activity, that an heavenly influence may be substituted in its stead.

Man may, indeed, open the window; but it is the Son himself that must give the light. Jesus has exemplified this in the gospel: Martha did what was right, but because she did it in her own spirit, he rebuked her. The spirit of man is restless and turbulent; for which reason it does little, though it would appear to do much. "Martha," said Jesus, "thou art careful and troubled about many things but one thing is needful; and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her." And what was it that Mary had chosen? Repose, tranquility, and peace. She apparently ceased to act, that the spirit of Christ might act in her; she ceased to live, that Christ might be her life.

Peter, in the warmth of his affection, told Jesus that, for his sake, he was ready willingly to lay down his life; but, at the word of a young damsel, he denied him.

The many troubles in life come from the soul not abiding in its place, and not being content with the will of God, and what is afforded therein, from time to time. Many souls may be resigned as to the general will, and yet fail as to the present moment: being out of the will of God, they fall: they renew such falls as long as they continue out of the divine will; when they return to it all will go on well. God loves what is done in his own order, and his own will and time; and while you faithfully give yourself up to that, you will do all things right.

All men have affections and lusts, except those who live in the Divine will. Some of these desires may appear to be good; but unless they are according to the will of God, he who rests in the Divine will, though he is exempt from all these desires, is infinitely more peaceful, and glorifies God more. This shows us how necessary it is to renounce ourselves, and all our own activity, to follow Christ; and we cannot follow him, without being animate with his Spirit. Now that his Spirit may gain admission in us, it is necessary that our spirit should be first subdued: "He that is joined to the Lord," said Paul, "is one spirit."

All things should be done in their season: every state has its commencement, its progress, and its consummation; and it is an unhappy error to stop in the beginning. There is nothing that does not have its procedure; and at first we must labor with diligence and toil, but at last we shall reap the harvest of our industry. When the vessel is in port, the mariners are obliged to exert all their strength that they may clear her, and put to sea; but at length they turn her with facility, as they please. In like manner, while the soul remains in sin and creaturely entanglements, very frequent and strenuous endeavors are requisite to effect its freedom; the cords which hold it must be loosed; and then, by strong and vigorous efforts, it pushes off gradually from its old port; and, in leaving that at a distance, it proceeds to the haven to which it wishes to steer.

When the vessel is thus put in motion, in proportion as she advances on the sea, she leaves the land behind; and the further she departs from her old harbor, the less difficulty and labor is required to move her forward: at length, she gets sweetly under sail: and now proceeds so swiftly in her course, that the oar, which has become useless, is laid aside. How is the pilot now employed? He is content with spreading the sails and holding the rudder. To spread the sails is to lay the mind open before God, that it may be acted upon by his Spirit; to hold the rudder is to restrain the heart from wandering from the true course, recalling it gently, and guiding it steadily to the dictates of the blessed Spirit, which gradually gains possession and dominion of it; just as the wind by degrees fills the sails, and impels the vessel.

While the winds are fair, the mariners rest from their labors, and the vessel glides rapidly along without their toil, and when they thus repose, and leave the vessel to the wind, they make more way in one hour, than they had done in a length of time by their own former efforts: were they now even to attempt using the oar, they would not only fatigue themselves, but retard the vessel by their ill timed labors.

This is the manner of acting that we should pursue interiorly: it will, indeed, advance us in a very short time, by the divine influence, infinitely further than a whole life spent in repeated acts of self exertion.

If the wind is contrary, and blows a storm, instead of putting out to sea, we must cast anchor to hold the vessel. Our anchor is a firm confidence and hope in Divine Power, waiting patiently the calming of the tempest, and the return of a more favorable wind, as David "waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto him, and heard his cry." We must therefore be resigned to his Spirit, giving up ourselves wholly to his divine guidance; never allowing ourselves to be disquieted by any accident for inquietude is the door by which the enemy gets into the soul, to rob it of its peace; neither should we concern or busy ourselves with what others say and do, for this will be a great cause of disturbance to us.

Let us pacify all the motions of our heart, as soon as we see it in agitation. Let us quiet all pleasure that comes not from a pure source. Let us do away with all unprofitable thoughts and musings. Let us diligently seek God within us, and we shall infallibly find him, and with him, joy and peace; such joy and peace that will endure in the midst of suffering, and which, flowing from an inexhaustible source, becomes a perpetual fountain of delight. "Peace I leave with you," said Christ, "my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you."

Did we but know the blessedness of harkening unto God, and how greatly the soul is invigorated and strengthened by this, all flesh would surely be silent before him; all would be still as soon as he appeared. But to engage us further in a boundless resignation, he assures us, by the same prophet,

that we should fear nothing in giving up ourselves to him, because he takes care of us, surpassing the highest tenderness of which we can form an idea: "Can a woman," said he, "forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, she may forget; yet I will not forget you." Oh, blessed assurance, full of consolation! Who, after this, shall be fearful of resigning themselves wholly to the dispensation and guidance of their God!

All men seek for peace, but they seek where it is not to be found. They seek it in the world, which is ever promising, but can never give us solid peace; for, where we go, we shall carry this source of every perplexity, our own unsubdued and selfish will. The love of liberty is one of the most dangerous passions of the heart. If we follow this propensity, instead of true liberty, it reduces us to slavery. As our passions are the worst of tyrants, if we obey them partially, we must always be in a perpetual strife and contest within; and if we entirely give ourselves up to them, it is horrid to think to what extremities they will lead; they will torment the heart, and, like a torrent, sweep all before them, and yet never be satisfied. True liberty is to be found only in him, whose truth shall set us free, and who shall make us experience that to serve him is to reign.

That piety by which we are sanctified, and entirely devoted to God, consists in doing his will precisely, in all circumstances in life. Take what steps you please, do what deeds you will, let shine with luster, yet you shall not be rewarded but for having done the will of you sovereign Master. Although your servant did wonders in your house, yet if he did not what you required, you would not value his service, and you might justly complain of him as a bad servant.

There is no good spirit but that of God: that spirit, which removes us from the true good, is but a spirit of illusion, however flattering it may appear. Who would be carried in a magnificent chariot on the road to an abyss! The way which leads to a precipice is frightful, although it should be covered with roses; but the way that leads to a crown is delightful, although it should be thick set with thorns. He has given his good spirit to instruct us, the Spirit of Grace; therefore, let us no longer follow our own will, but his; so that not only our religious actions, but also all others, may be done with no other view but that of pleasing him; then will our whole conduct be sanctified; then will our deeds become a continual sacrifice; and incessant prayer, and uninterrupted love will occupy the heart; therefore, let us submit to the annihilation of our own will, that his will may reign in us! For it is his prerogative to command, our duty to obey.

16. ON THE POSSESSION OF PEACE AND REST BEFORE GOD

The soul that is faithful in the exercise of that love and adherence to God already described is astonished to feel him gradually taking possession of its whole being; and now enjoys a continual sense of that presence which is become, as it were, natural to it. This presence diffuses in us an unusual serenity throughout all our faculties - it calms the mind, and gives a sweet repose and quiet, even in the midst of our daily labors; but then we must be resigned to him without reserve.

We must, however, urge it as a matter of the highest importance, to cease from self action and self exertion, that the divine Power may act alone; he said by the mouth of his prophet David, "Be still, and know that I am God." Yet those greatly err, who accuse this species of prayer of idleness, a charge that can only arise from inexperience. If they would but make some efforts towards the attainment of it, they would soon experience the contrary or what they suppose, and find their accusation groundless.

This appearance of inaction is, indeed, not the consequence of sterility and want, but of fruitfulness and abundance; this will be clearly known by the experienced soul, which will know and feel, that its silence is full and unctuous, and the result of causes totally the reverse of apathy and barrenness. The interior is not a stronghold to be taken by storm and violence; but a Kingdom of peace, which is to be gained only by love. Let us then give ourselves up to God without apprehension of danger. He will love us, and enable us to love him; and that love, increasing daily, will produce in us all other virtues. He alone can replenish our hearts which the world has agitated and intoxicated, but never could fill.

He will take nothing from us but that makes us unhappy. For many things that we have consumed on our lusts in the past, we will now use them to fill our needs with thanksgiving to our great creator of all good things. Then the most ordinary and seemingly indifferent actions will become exercises of virtue, and sources of consolation. We shall behold in peace the approach of death, as the beginning of life immortal; and as Paul said, "We shall not be unclothed; but clothed upon, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

Let us therefore no longer fear to commit ourselves wholly to him. What risk do we run, in depending solely on his goodness? Ah! He will not deceive us, unless by bestowing an abundance beyond our highest hopes; but those who expect all from themselves will inevitably be deceived, and must suffer this rebuke by the prophet Isaiah: "Behold all you that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about

with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled. This shall you have of my hand; you shall lie down in sorrow."

The soul advanced thus far has no need of any other preparation other than quietness: for now the Divine presence, which is the great effect, or rather the continuation of prayer, begins to be powerfully felt, and the soul experiences what the apostle Paul said, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him." The soul certainly enjoys transcendent blessedness, and feels that it is no longer she or he that lives, but Christ that lives in the person; and that the only way to find him is to turn the mind inward. We no sooner do this, than we are filled with the consolations of his presence: we are so amazed at so great a blessing, and enjoy the internal converse, which external matters cannot interrupt.

He said that if we keep his words, we love him; and "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

17: ON PERFECTION, OR THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH GOD

The most profitable and desirable state in this life is that of Christian perfection, which consists in the union of the soul with Infinite Purity, a union that includes in it all spiritual good; producing in us a freedom of spirit; which raises us above all the events and changes of this life, and which frees us from the tyranny of human fear; it gives an extraordinary power for the well performing of all actions, and acquitting ourselves well in our employments; a prudence truly Christian in all our undertakings; a peace and perfect tranquility in all conditions; and, in short, a continual victory over self love and our passions.

It is impossible to attain Divine union solely by the activity of meditation, or by the meltings of the affections, or by the highest degree of luminous and elegantly composed prayer; for, according to Scripture, "no man shall see God and live." Now all the exercises of non-silent prayer, and even of active contemplation, being performed in the life of our own will, we "cannot thereby see God;" for all that is of man's own power or exertion must first die, be it ever so noble; ever so exalted.

John related, "that there was silence in heaven." Now heaven represents the center of the soul, where all the divine Majesty appears, all must be hushed to silence. All efforts, no the very existence, of self-love must be destroyed; because it is the natural will that is opposed to God, and all the malignity of man proceeds from it, so that the purity of the soul increases in proportion to the natural will being subjected to the His Will.

Therefore, the soul can never arrive at union but by the annihilation of its will; nor can it ever become one with the Father, but by being reestablished in the purity of its first creation.

God purifies the soul by his love, as refiners do metals in the furnace. Gold cannot be purified but by fire, which gradually separates from it, and consumes all that is worldly and heterogeneous; it must be melted and dissolved, and all impure mixtures taken away, by casting it again and again into the furnace; thus it is refine from all internal corruption, and even exalted to a state incapable of further purification. It no longer contains an adulterate mixture; its purity is perfect, its simplicity complete and it is fit for the most exquisite workmanship. Thus we may see that the divine Spirit, as an unremitting fire, must devour and destroy, all that is earthly, sensual and carnal, and all self-activity, before the soul can be fitted for, and capable of, union with God and Christ.

"I will make man more precious than fine gold." But when the Word which was in the beginning begins to burn, destroy, and purify; then the soul, not perceiving the salutary design of these operations, shrinks back from them; and as gold seems rather to blacken than brighten when first put into the furnace, so the soul conceives that its purity is lost, and that its temptations are its sins."

But while we confess that the enjoyment of God is the end for which we were created; that "without holiness," none can attain it; and that to attain it we must necessarily pass through a severe, purifying process; how strange is it, that we should dread and avoid this process, as if that could be the cause of evil and imperfection in the present life, which is to be productive of glory and blessedness in the life to come!

Let all, then, press forward to the mark, suffering yourself to be guided and governed by the spirit of grace, which will infallibly change you and conduct you to the end of your creation; purity and the enjoyment of union with God and Christ.

It may perhaps be said that some may pretend to have attained this blessed state; but alas! None can any more pretend this than the wretch, who is on the pint of perishing with hunger, can for a length of time pretend to be full and satisfied; some wish or word, some sigh or sign, will inevitably escape him, and betray his famished state.

“Be perfect, even as you Father, who is in heaven, is perfect.” The soul, remaining in its disorderly will, is imperfect; it becomes more perfect, in proportion as it approaches nearer to the Divine will. When a soul is advanced so far that it cannot in anything depart from the Divine will, it is then wholly perfect, unites with, and is transformed into, the divine nature; and being thus purified and united to Infinite Purity, it finds a profound peace, and a sweet rest, which brings it to such a perfect union of love, that it is filled with joy. It conforms itself to the will of the great Original in all emergencies, and rejoices in everything to do the divine good pleasure.

The Lord draws near to such a soul, and communicates inwardly to it. He fills it with himself because it is empty; clothes it with his light and his love, because it is naked; lifts it up, because it is low; and unites it with himself.

If you would enter into this heaven on earth, forget every care and every anxious thought, get out of yourself, that the love of God may live in your soul, so that you may be enabled to say with the apostle: “It is no longer I that live, but Christ who lives within me.” How happy we would be if we could leave all for him, seek him only, breathe after him only; let only Him have our sighs. Oh, that we could but go on without interruption toward this blessed state! God call us to do so and come to him. He invites us to enter our inward center, where he will renew and change us, and show us a new and heavenly kingdom, full of joy, peace, content, and serenity.

The spiritual, abstracted and retired soul has here its peace no more broken, though outwardly it may meet with combats, and may sometimes be naked, forsaken, fought against, and desolate, because, from the infinite distance, tempests never reach to that serenest heaven within where pure and perfect love resides. For although the prince of darkness may indeed make violent assaults against it; yet it makes headway against them, and stand like a strong pillar; no more happening to it than happens to a high mountain in a storm. The valley is darkened with thick clouds, fierce tempests of hail, and thunder; while the lofty mountain glitters by the bright beams of the sun, in quietness and serenity, continuing clear like heaven, immovable, and full of light; such a soul, indeed, is a “mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but lives forever.”

In this throne of quiet are manifest the perfections of spiritual beauty; here we shall enjoy the true light of the secret and divine mysteries of Christ, perfect humility, the amplest resignation, the meekness and innocence of the dove, liberty and purity of heart; here is witnessed joyful simplicity, heavenly indifference, continual prayer, total nakedness, perfect disinterestedness, and conversation of heaven. This is the rich hidden treasure; this is the pearl of great price.