

A PARTICULAR ADDRESS TO THOSE SELECT SOULS, WHO
HAVE RESIGNED THEMSELVES TO GOD, AND HIS IN-
WARDLY HIDDEN LIFE.

To you, ye elect and beloved souls, ye devout Nazarenes, unto you, my dearest brethren and sisters, who have sincerely dedicated and consecrated yourselves to a more exact religion, and to the hidden life with Christ in God; to you in particular, I have still to address, in love, a word of admonition and incitement on the present occasion. For although some of you even already possess the Spirit of unction, (1 John 2: 27) which leads you in to all truth; yet the wisdom that is from above, will also manifest itself in this instance, by gladly receiving instruction from another. (James 3:17) But that I may not myself be found lacking, I will seek to keep my own soul especially in view, whilst addressing yours.

We see from all that has been said, that we are not to govern, form, and limit ourselves according to the example of others, although they may be pious people; but that God most certainly demands of us something particular. (Matt. 5:47) I mean stricter duties, and a more holy life and conversation, both inwardly and outwardly than is alas ! evidenced by others. Let us therefore forget what is behind, and keep the mark and the prize in our eye, which our heavenly vocation holds out to us. Let others live as they please, and though many of the pious are not without their failings, what is that to thee and me? Let us only look, with a tranquil and introverted mind, to him, who is ever calling to us to follow him. (John 21:22) Great and unspeakably glorious is our high vocation in reality; but let us remember the words of our Saviour, "Many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. 20:16) It is not he, that has more light or a deeper insight into the ways of God, who is better than others; but he who has more love, and leads a more exact and holy life. In this, my beloved, consists that peculiarity, which must be found in us above others.

If others serve God and mammon at the same time, and whilst professing to be pious, are seeking and laying up treasures on earth, by engaging in extensive secular concerns: let us look unto him, who calls unto all those that resolve in earnest to follow him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." (Luke 9:58) And remember, that if the former be Israelites, we ought to be Levites, a royal priesthood, concerning whom God has said, "Ye shall possess nothing in the land, nor have any portion amongst them; for I am your portion and your inheritance." (Numbers 18:20, Deut. 10:9, Ezek. 44:28) We must show that we are dead to the world, and look no longer at the things that are seen; but that our lives are hid in God, and our abstracted, world and wealth denying walk must be as a loud voice, saying unto all men, "God alone is sufficient!" (Psalm 73:25)

If others take and allow themselves liberties by an immoderate condescension and seeking to please men, in the company they keep, in their conversation, in fashions, and such like vanities; we must be particular, in this respect, and not give way to the world a hair's breadth; better be called self-willed than worldly-minded. How easily may giving way become going astray, and by a too great complacency to this Delilah, the inward power be lost, as in a dream.

The jealousy of the Bridegroom of our souls does not permit so much to be done to please his rival, and he that will not believe it, must feel to his loss, "that the friendship of the world is enmity against God." (James 4:4)

If others follow their sensual appetites, and spend and misspend their valuable time in the variety, and adorning, and beauty of their dress, their houses, and their furniture; and apply so much valuable attention to the ease and enjoyment of their vile bodies; it is for us to show that we are not sensual nor animal, but spiritual men; who therefore no longer live after the flesh and sense, but after the spirit, (Rom. 8:1, 4, 9) and do not seek to lie here upon roses and at ease, when our Head and Forerunner was born in a wretched stable and manger, and died upon the cross, wearing a crown of thorns. Indeed I cannot believe it, nor do I know whether the world will believe it, that the inward Christianity of those, is great and exact, who will have everything outwardly so elegant, so convenient, and so precisely to their mind, even did they know all mysteries, and spoke of the most exalted spirituality. He that feels himself called to be an heir of heaven and bride of the King of Kings ought therefore to be "all glorious within", (Psalm 45:14) that his inward part may become a suitable dwelling and residence of the Divine Majesty; and hence he will find so much to cleanse, adorn, and beautify, that he will soon lose all relish for any external fancies.

If we see others turning outwards into the senses, and by trifling and unnecessary hearing, seeing, speaking, and thinking, open their hearts as it were to the creature; let our hearts be as an enclosed garden, and a sealed fountain to all created objects, and solely open to the Beloved of our souls. We must wait day and night at the posts of his doors, as a spiritual priesthood; and therefore we are under obligation, because we believe the Lord to be present in the temple of our hearts, (Zech. 2:13) from that reverence which we supremely owe to him, to keep our mouths, minds, and thoughts in holy silence and abstraction. When we speak, we ought to speak from God, before God, in Christ Jesus, and real words of God; (1 Pet. 4:11). For can you suppose, my dearly beloved, that we who may here behold and address the Lord of glory within us, are at liberty to slight him so much, as to leave him there, so to speak, and turn ourselves outwards to visible things? O how irreverent would such conduct be! Our silent, considerate, abstracted, and retired life and deportment ought rather to give to everyone an impression of the inwardly hidden holiness and fear of God. It was in reference to this, that Bernieres commended his spiritual guide, after the latter's decease, saying, "The mere remembrance of him replaces my soul in the presence of God, if it have wandered from him; and gives me courage and boldness to strive earnestly after true virtue."

If others fix their affections first on one created object, and then on another, and seek and find in them enjoyment, comfort, joy, and delight; let our hearts, our affections, and all our love be solely and eternally devoted, in true virgin chastity, to the Bridegroom of our souls. If we still possess too little love to love the infinitely lovely Good sufficiently, how can we dare to deprive him of any part of it? And besides, what is there in the wretched and needy creature that may not be found in supreme perfection, and infinite abundance in the Creator, and be enjoyed a hundred fold, even in this life? (Matt. 19:29) Therefore let our whole hearts say unto every good that is not this one and supreme good, "I need thee not."

On the whole, we must be dead to all created things, and lead a hidden life with Christ in God; a life of holiness and godliness, of humility and meekness, of simplicity and innocence, of love and mercy, of chastity and of moderation; in short, a life before God, and in God.

But my beloved, besides all this, let us most carefully beware, in all our walk and conduct before God and man, of all affectation, dissimulation, outside holiness, and formality, which vice has so got possession of us, that frequently without our knowledge, it defiles our life and conduct, if not in a gross, yet in a subtle manner; by which the mind is stripped of all freedom, peace, and liberty of spirit. Our conduct, walk, words, and gestures as well as the thoughts and disposition of the heart, must be judged and weighed, not by men, who only see the outside, but by the purest light of God. We must not seek to appear holy, but to be holy, and that in the eyes of God alone, who searcheth the heart and the reins. We must keep our inmost souls constantly naked and open to the rays of this eternal sun that we may walk in simplicity and purity, in truth and righteousness. (2 Cor. 1:12) God is a God of truth; we must therefore walk in the truth, and in simplicity of heart, if we are desirous of having fellowship with so pure a being.

Be it likewise consequently far from us, when possessing an insight into, and finding ourselves called to this more strict and particular Christian course, to imagine ourselves to be something particular, and exalt ourselves above other pious persons, or even arrogate to ourselves some spiritual privilege or title of honor, and mentally slight, or even despise others. By such conduct, we should show that though we had a light, yet we had not the reality or experience of genuine and inward Christianity; because the most profound humility and thorough self-annihilation are the essential properties, characteristics, and aim of the truly inward life. But if we really possess some degree of experience and progress in this divine life, the divine unction will, undoubtedly teach us, that we have to ascribe it, not to our own diligence and fidelity, but to the unmerited grace and power of God. What have we then, that has not been given us? Are we become holy and blessed? It is by grace, and not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. (Ephes. 2:8) What have we then to boast of? If there be anything good in us, it is not of us, nor is it ours: it is and remains God's property, who has it in his power to take his own back again.

And therefore if we may not glory, even in any measure in our piety and virtues, or regard them with self-complacency; how much less are we at liberty to do so, in reference to spiritual or divine gifts, sweetness, joy, or illumination, even were it ecstasies and revelations! We must indeed accept the gifts of God with thankfulness, but presume so little upon them, as to be able to restore them any moment, to the giver without difficulty, and seek our rest in him alone, and not in his gifts. Ah how many in the possession of such like gifts and sensibilities, imagine themselves very fervent, pious, and holy, whilst they are perhaps still full of self-love, self-will, and self-conceit, instead of that most necessary humiliation and self-abasement before God, and beneath every creature. It is written, "Rejoice in the Lord," (Phil. 4:4) and "count it all joy, when ye fall into manifold temptations," (James 1:2) but of gifts, it is said, "Rejoice not," (Luke 10:20). We must be perfected and united with God, not so much by doing and enjoying, as by suffering and privation, (Heb. 2:10). Let us remember and retain it well, that the substance of

Christianity and true holiness does not consist in such like things; but in dying to ourselves and every creature, and in leading a hidden life with Christ in God, and before God.

I say "with Christ," for ah, how soon everything vanishes, that is not founded on Christ! The sole, real, and immutable basis of the inward life is the inward or mystic union and fellowship with Christ Jesus, by faith. Here, neither good intentions and resolutions, nor our own willing and running, (Rom. 9:16) nor any legal exertions of our own powers avail, in order to the due foundation and establishment of our holiness. We know what the Supreme Teacher of inward life says, "Abide in me, and so shall ye bring forth much fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing," (John 15:5) that we might only strongly believe and continually practice it! What is required of us, is to depart from ourselves, in the deepest conviction of our own inability, and with fervent desires of faith, cleave in the center of our souls, to this only source of all grace and holiness, and "Receive out of this fullness, grace upon grace." (John 1:16) Let us by withdrawing our affections from all created things, continually retire into him, and wherever we go or stay, rove or rest, habituate ourselves to abide in a childlike manner, in him. And thus shall the vital power of his Spirit, which pervades us from within, thoroughly sanctify body, soul, and spirit, (1 Thess. 5:2, 3) We shall then see, whether Martha, with her well-meant outward labors and efforts, or Mary, with her sitting at the feet of her Saviour, will attain the better part, the one thing needful. (Luke 10:42)

But now my highly esteemed brethren and sisters, if we find ourselves redeemed from the earth, and made kings and priests unto God, and if we have freedom of access in the center of our souls, into the most holy place, before the presence of God: let us never forget to ascribe thanksgiving and honor to the precious atoning blood of Jesus Christ, by which alone, this grace has been purchased for us, (Rev. 5:9) and is opened to us. (Heb. 10:9) For certainly, had not Jesus Christ died for us, and rose again, the way to true holiness and communion with God might have been eternally closed against us, miserable creatures; which I touch upon here particularly, because those who apply themselves to a strict and inward Christianity, or bear witness of it, are universally blamed, as if by so doing, they slighted or even despised the work of redemption accomplished by Christ for us. Now I will not deny, that possibly many, who have not hitherto been particularly humbled by inward affliction, poverty, and suffering, may, with a good intent, in order to resist the general abuse of this truth, have used immoderate and inconsiderate expressions, and may have run into extremes; yet all truly enlightened souls, even the so-called mystics amongst the Roman Catholics, have in reality more highly esteemed and gloried in the merits of Jesus Christ, as our atonement and justification, than perhaps many of their accusers. But let us, ye elect souls, meanwhile acknowledge with humble thankfulness, that if we had no Jesus for us, we should never have a Jesus in us. And, if we should ever be exalted to the state of the most elevated and purest contemplation of the Deity, whether in this life or the next, yet this consideration will ever remain most delightfully and supremely precious to us. The Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and thanks giving and praise; for he was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every nation, and tongue, and kindred, and people, and hath made us kings and priests unto God. Amen and Amen.

“Blessed Saviour, Jesus ! who by thy death and resurrection, hast brought this divine and hidden life to light, Oh may the long-desired happy time arrive, when instead of all human ordinances, speculations, and controversies, this genuine, inward, Christian life may again flourish in its first esteem amongst all nations, that they may willingly submit their hearts to the sway of thy love ! Lo, I offer thee my heart, most lovely Jesus, sanctify me in this thy truth, conceal me ever deeper in the secret of thy countenance; hide me, my High Priest ! with thee in thy pavilion from every danger! Preserve, carry on, and perfect thy gracious work in me, that all the life of self may die and decay, till I see no other life, will, or motion in me, than that which proceeds from thee, and thy pure Spirit to the eternal glory of the Father!” Amen.