

Short Instructions on
HOW TO SEEK GOD

AND THE LIGHT OF HIS COUNTENANCE.

“They looked unto him and were enlightened, and their faces
were not ashamed.” Psalm 34:5

O man, even thou that reads this, stand still awhile, and seriously consider the noble end for which thou was created, and for which God hath placed thee in this world. Thou was not created for time and the creature, but for God and eternity, and to employ thyself with God and eternity. And thou are in the world, to the end that thou may again seek God and his beatifying countenance, from which thou hast turned thyself away by sin, and hast become attached to the creature; in order that thou may become thoroughly sanctified and enlightened, and that God may have joy, delight, peace, and pleasure in thee, and thou in God.

In this alone lies thy temporal and eternal salvation and well-being, which nothing out of God can give thee. The outward objects of this world can scarcely satisfy thine outward man, during the short period of thy toilsome life. But inwardly, thou hast a hunger, which cannot be satiated, and a mind that cannot be satisfied, except by an all sufficient and infinitely lovely object, which is God alone.

If therefore, O soul ! thou possesses! a sincere desire again to seek and find thy God and his countenance, take heed, that thou does not begin it in an improper manner. God is a Spirit, and near thy spirit, hence thou hast no need to run hither and thither, or distract thyself with a multitude and variety of exercises, much less with reasonings and reflections, which only serve to confuse thee. This would rather be the way to remove thee still further from God, and to make thee more unfit for the knowledge of him and his truth.

Seek only to become conformed to God in thy mind; thou mayest then infallibly and easily find him and become acquainted with him. Even as he, who wishes to behold and enjoy the sun, must place himself in its light: so must thou become like unto God, in order to enjoy real communion with him. This eternal and inaccessible light is only seen in its own light. (Psalm 36:9) God is a spiritual, eternal, unlimited, simple, meek, serene, and beatifying Being; now the more thou inwardly attain these qualities, the nearer thou approach unto God, and become capable of his manifestation and communication.

God is a secluded and spiritual Being, estranged from this gross world, the senses, and reason. Therefore if thou will find him and see his face, thou must likewise keep thyself with thy spirit, love, affection, and desires of thy heart, as much as possible separate and estranged from the world and all that is in the world. Do not voluntarily admit any created object into thee, nor fix thy love and affections on any creature out of thee. Avoid all unnecessary digression and

exertion of thy senses and reason. Regard thy sensible and rational part as if it were another person, and continue in spirit with thy desires and affections directed towards God within thee. Make thyself very familiar with him in the secret recesses of thy spirit, and be unmindful of what occurs outwardly.

God dwells in himself, in eternity. He is ever the same; with him there is neither past nor future, but an eternal now. Therefore if thou wilt draw near to him, and have fellowship with him, avoid all unnecessary reflections on the past or the future, all thy reasonings, cares, and searchings; and like an innocent infant, abide with thy mind and sense in the present moment with the Lord, and let him care for thee and guide thee.

God is a universal, undivided, and unlimited Being, and cannot be comprehended by reason. He is neither this nor that particular thing, but one and all.* Hence in order to know God, and to approach near to him, thou must gently divest thyself of all peculiarity, all thy particular limited childish images and thoughts of God, take thy reason captive under the simplicity of faith, and enter, with thy spirit, into an unlimited universality and serene extension of mind, without particular object and reflection, especially at the time of prayer.

* Let it not be supposed here, that this is anything else than sound reason. The meaning is, that the particular excellences of a creature may be divided, measured, limited, and comprehended. But God is an extremely simple Being. He is not any particular perfection, but all good, and all perfection, in indivisible, incomprehensible unity.

God is simplicity and purity itself; on which account, no one can find or see him, who is not of a clean and pure heart. (Matt. 5:1) Therefore seek likewise to become pure and simple in all things. Be upright and sincere in all things and everywhere, in thy actions, speech, thoughts, and desires. Let the single eye of thy mind look strait to God, and have him for its object in all things, without any impure secondary motive or self-seeking, remote from all gross or refined hypocrisy, dissimulation, or formality. Let all thy thoughts and actions be such as dare be seen by the radiant sun of the Divine presence; and if anything false or impure arise within thee against thy will, lay it open, with sincerity and tranquility, before the Divine presence, and it will disappear.

God is a meek and friendly Being; "He is love; and he that abideth in love, abideth in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16) Be therefore also meek, friendly, and kind in thy whole conduct and deportment. Let the wrathful and opposite powers of thy nature, be softened by the Spirit of the love of Jesus, the obduracy of thy temper be calmed, and thy obstinate self-will be bent and rendered pliable; and as often as anything of an opposite nature springs up in thee, immerse thyself immediately into the sweet element of meekness and love.

God is a placid Being, and dwells in a serene eternity; therefore thy mind must become like a clear and silent streamlet, in which the glory of God can reflect and portray itself. Hence thou must avoid all disturbance, confusion, and irritation, inwardly and outwardly. There is nothing in the world deserves being troubled about; even thy past faults must only humble, but not

disturb thee. "God is in his holy temple, (Hab 2:20) let all that is within thee keep silence before him!" silent with thy lips, silent with thy desires and thoughts, silent as it respects thine own activity. O how profitable and precious is a meek and quiet spirit in the sight of God! (1 Pet. 3:4.)

God is a happy, contented, and delightful being: seek therefore to acquire an ever joyful and peaceful spirit; avoid all anxious cares, vexation, murmuring, and melancholy, which obscure the mind, and make thee unfit for converse with God: turn thyself meekly away from it, when thou art conscious of anything of the kind in thee. Let thy heart be estranged from, and closed against all the world and every creature, but entirely familiar with, and open to God. Keep a very strict eye upon thyself, thine evil lusts, self-love, and self-will: but towards God, be truly free, childlike, affectionate, and confidential. Regard him as the friend of thy heart, and think nothing but what is purely good of him. Though everything without, fall into confusion, and though thy body be in pain and suffering, and thy soul in barrenness and distress, yet let thy spirit be unmoved by it all, placid and serene, elevated above the accidents of all things, and delighted in and with its God inwardly, and with his good pleasure outwardly.

If thou endeavor to exercise thyself in this manner, thy mind will gradually become more conformed unto God, and also more and more capable of substantially finding this all-sufficient and most amiable Good, and of beholding his beatifying countenance.

In reference to which, I would add the following important remarks. FIRST. That because external objects and occupations, particularly as long as we are not well versed and established in this exercise, occasion much distraction, and hinder the mind in it, more or less, and put it out of the proper frame: it is highly useful and necessary, now and then during the day, to appropriate a short time, specially and purposely, for the wholly divesting ourselves of all visible objects and reflections, for recollecting ourselves in the presence of God, and for entering into the requisite state of mind, by the assistance of his grace; every one according as his state and outward circumstances will permit.

SECONDLY. We must above all things believe and be firmly persuaded, that all depends upon the mercy of God, and not upon our willing or running (Rom. 9:16). Therefore we must not expect to find and see God by our own diligence, much less by our own efforts and mental exertions. Our activity in approaching to God, must be a wholly inward, gentle, calm and peaceful act or inclination of our will, our love, and our heart; in which it principally depends upon the divine influence, and the secret attraction of the love of God, to which we must simply attend and follow, and before which, all our own activity must cease and be silent. When we perceive that the Lord will elevate or collect, calm or tranquillize us, or that a profound feeling of satisfaction, a filial reverence for his presence, or anything of the kind, is felt in the center of the soul; we must fearlessly resign ourselves to his operation, and continue passive in his hands, in all simplicity and abstraction.

Thou wilt then in time experience, that thou hast not only an outward man, a body, senses, and reason, which belong to this life, and the objects of time: but also an inward man, a noble

spirit, that has its root and foundation in eternity, and such powers of spirit, which (independent of all that is, and happens in the world) are capable of enjoying and beholding God and eternal things, in a substantial manner, to their complete and real delight and repose.

Thy love, thy heart, the fiery desire of thy soul, would then at length, (and this is the very end for which we are created and redeemed,) when they are emptied of all things, imbibe and possess the Supreme Good, the infinite Deity, in its boundless capacity. With all the powers of thy love collected into one, thou wouldst embrace this Eternal love, this beatifying Being, in the most tender and cordial manner, as an innocent child its kind mother, and press him to thy heart with the purest familiarity, and be blissfully embraced by him in return. Thou wouldst be enabled to shut thyself up, as it were, with this intimate friend of thy soul, in thy inmost closet, in the center of thy heart, far, far from any creature. In this sweet solitude, through the blissful proximity of this all sufficient Being, thou wouldst also become in some measure all sufficient; that is, thou wouldst be so perfectly satisfied, delighted, and contented with thy God, that for all the glory, riches, and pleasures of heaven and earth, thou wouldst not cast a look outwards, nor esteem them worthy of an inclination of thy love; but in secret thou wouldst burn like a seraph, in the purest love of thy God; and under the influence of this gentle flame of love, become wholly kind, meek, amiable, yea love itself.

Thy pure understanding, the eye of thy mind, would be turned inwards and away from every other object, and enlightened, strengthened, and elevated in spirit, by the light of eternal wisdom, in order that it may stand like a cherub, with downcast visage, and contemplate the face of God, Wisdom itself, the mirror without spot. In this light thou wouldst know light, even truth; and this very glory of the Lord would in return reflect itself in thy clear and serene center. (2 Cor. 3:18) Thy formless, naked countenance and the uncovered beatifying countenance of thy God, would meet, salute, and embrace each other, with the most affectionate regards. Thou wouldst fix thy simplified eye, like a little innocent infant, upon the countenance of God, steadfastly and joyfully; and he in return, like a faithful and affectionate parent, would keep his eye directed to thee, by which thou wouldst be thoroughly sanctified, and transformed into the same image, from glory to glory.

Thy mind, or intellectual capacity, abstracted from all creature joy, solace, and delight, would be filled with the purest and most inward joy, and the profoundest peace. All thy delight, joy, and bliss would be in God, and God in return, would have his joy and good pleasure in thee. He would rest and dwell in thee, as in his serene throne of peace; and thy spirit, that had so long gone astray, like an outcast orphan in a foreign land, would also again sweetly repose in its true rest and home, and lie down in the lap of God, in undisturbed peace, and hide itself in the stillness of eternity. In this boundless kingdom of peace, thou would live untouched and undisturbed by the tempests of the affections, and be secluded from all perturbing joy, grief, fear, and hope, which might assail thy spirit from without.

And thus thou would become a clear heaven of the ever blessed triune God, in which he dwelt, and which he filled with his light, love, and every divine virtue, and in which he would glorify himself in time and in eternity.

Therefore be no longer so foolish, O thou noble creature and image of the eternal God, as to make thy kingly, (I will not say divine) spirit and its noble powers, so shamefully the slaves of the base, beggarly, and worthless creature and vanity, by the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. For God has sent his Son, in order to redeem thee from such bondage, and to exalt thy spirit again to the glorious liberty of the children of God. Remember, that as it respects thy superior part, thou art a child of eternity; God himself is thy Father and thy home: there must thou live and dwell. The world must be to thee a land of banishment, and thy body a prison and purgatory. O, lift up therefore, the everlasting doors of thy mental powers above nature, sense, and reason, that the King of Glory, the God of Hosts may enter into thee !