

# ON TRUE GODLINESS

From the writings of Gerhard Tersteegen - (1697-1769)

*Gerhard Tersteegen was a German contemporary of John Wesley. He wished for a secluded life, but crowds besieged his dwelling place, eager to feast on the words of wisdom that fell from the lips of one who had been closeted with his Maker. Everywhere he went, crowds gathered by wayside, in barns, and in homes where their famished souls feasted upon the Bread of Life. Tersteegen was also a prolific hymn writer.*

I.

It is a very lamentable thing, that in these our last, dark, and corrupted times, godliness, piety, or the true service of God, and religion, (for all these are one and the same thing,) is become so rare, and so little known upon earth; nay, that even amongst Christians, or those whose profession or peculiar character it is, (according to the Word of God,) to let their godliness shine as lights in the eyes of all other nations upon earth: that amongst these, I say, true piety or godliness is so little known, that they universally manifest disgust at the very name of piety ; or if they talk of godliness, they do not even know of what they are speaking; and where others form an idea of it, it is soon perceived, on close examination in the light of God, that their conceptions of it are far from being in accordance with the nature of the thing itself, and that notwithstanding all the external appearance and form of godliness, its power is universally unknown, and is even rejected as mere imagination and error. I have therefore felt myself induced to give you a definition of it, on this occasion, with all possible brevity, according to the measure of light and grace, which God shall bestow. If there were still a single church of primitive Christians anywhere to be found, such as they were in the two or three first centuries, the task would be unnecessary, and I should esteem myself happy to learn of them, and to read in them, as living epistles, written by the Spirit of God, (2 Cor.3:2, 3) something of that, concerning which, I esteem myself too mean and unworthy to write with ink.

In order to form to ourselves an idea of the nature, quality, and essence of true godliness, or to describe a real godly man, it is only reasonable that we do not direct our thoughts, first, to such things, which the hypocrite and the ungodly can have in common with those that are really godly ; nor, secondly, to anything, which the godly alone, but only some of them possess ; nor, lastly, to something, which they may all, but not at all times possess : but we must seek for such properties, which the truly pious alone, and all of them, and at all times solely possess. This is so evident, that no one can deny it. Let us see, with all brevity, what results from these propositions.

First, Godliness does not consist in anything which the ungodly and the hypocrite can have in

common with the truly pious. Hence, when we refrain from gross vices, when we do not curse, nor are drunken, nor steal, nor quarrel, etc., but lead an externally sober, just, decorous, retired, quiet, and social life, it is no sufficient proof that we are pious and godly: nay, though we should have all this, and naught besides, or nothing more substantial, we should only rank with the ungodly and the hypocrite.

We may diligently attend to outward ceremonies, which are good in themselves, and to pious duties ; we may be baptized, and go to church and sacrament ; we may read, learn, and meditate upon that which is good, make external prayers, fast, and give alms; we may commend, and in some measure love piety and the pious, and we may associate with them, possess much literal knowledge of the truth, know how to converse in a pious strain, and yet with all this, be in reality not yet pious. We may be convinced of God and his truth; be sensibly affected even to tears, or joy; we may be reproved and distressed in our consciences; we may desire and form resolutions to repent, and really change and amend ourselves externally, and avoid obvious sins; nay, we may even abandon secret sins, (which we still love at the bottom,) from distress of conscience, and fear of hell; and yet not be truly godly. All this is evident, and has also been circumstantially enlarged upon by others ;\* and yet i were all those, who have only this, and nothing more, to I be struck out of the catalogue of the pious, there would; probably be found, in whole towns and countries not many pious people left.

Secondly, I say that true godliness cannot consist in anything which some godly men may possess, or have possessed, but which all have not. Under this head may be (included ecstasies, revelations, the gift of prophecy, a wonder-working faith, extraordinary light in divine mysteries, brilliant gifts, an outwardly manifested zeal, and every other extraordinary gift of God's grace. Godliness does not consist in any of these.

Hence we must not particularly desire any such like high things, and by no means be envious, when we see or hear of them in others; for self-love often thinks, "Ah, if thou hadst such gifts, such light, and zeal as this or that individual, thou wouldst then be truly pious, and able to edify others, and induces us to imitate something or other, to which we are not called, and without the grace of God. All this arises from a principle of self-conceit and self-love, and is a very dangerous temptation of Satan, against which, we must arm ourselves by prayer and humility, and only labor to attain the substance of godliness, rejoicing meanwhile in the gifts which God has bestowed upon others.

He that possesses such things, has no cause to presume upon them, or to exalt himself above others, but to take heed that he does not cleave to them, and rest in them, or take a selfish pleasure in them, and also to stop both his heart and ears against the praise and

applause of others, since they are only gifts, which in themselves, make no one more pious, but in possessing which, the individual stands in greater danger than others, who do not possess them.

Thirdly, I said also, that the essence of true godliness cannot consist in anything that all the pious possess, but not at all times. All the pious, or most of them, often, experience spiritual and divine consolations, peace, sensible delights, sweetness, occasional assurances, and various other divine communications and shifts of grace. I say they experience such things frequently, but not at all times or without variation, from whence follows, that the substance of true godliness cannot consist in these things.

And therefore those act, in my opinion, imprudently, who having received gifts of this kind from God, speak of and esteem them almost more than the essence of godliness itself; and seem to adduce them as unequivocal signs and essential properties of faith and godliness, nay as the true end, which we must always strive to attain, and give ourselves no rest, till we have attained it.

Hence it is, that many a well-meaning person, who reads or hears such sentiments advanced, and has not yet enjoyed the like sensible gifts of grace, may fall into despondency, dejection, and doubt about his state, and be hindered in the path of self-denial and the cross, by frequently striving, from selfish motives, after joy and consolation, and seeking on all sides for signs and assurances of his salvation, more than for the marks and properties of true godliness.

Those that possess these gifts of grace, generally think well of themselves, and often secretly imagine they are now God's favorite children; that they are now holy, nay, better than others, and make themselves sure of heaven. Here the soul frequently forgets the true and only sure path of self-denial and the cross, and lays herself down to rest upon the soft couch of sensible enjoyments, desirous of erecting her tabernacle, before she has finished her journey.

Now if the Lord, in his wisdom, withdraws from such a soul, the milk of sensible consolation and sweetness, she becomes dejected, discouraged, and uneasy; and seeks to return and possess that, which (because it is a powerful support to the life of self) it is the will of God to take from her, that he may make her, like the Captain of her salvation, perfect through sufferings.

For although it is an undeniable truth, that in the course of godliness, many, great, and various gifts of grace are generally met with, and even enjoyed in a perceptible manner, as is confirmed by the whole of Holy Writ, and by innumerable testimonies of the saints in every

age, and by real experience to this present time; yet such gifts of grace, I say, are only met with in the course of godliness, and are, as it were, the resting places, and inns on the road, which are neither the way itself, nor the end of the way: and where we must not therefore always remain, but which are only occasionally met with, and must be used merely in case of need, for refreshment and recovery of strength, that we may afterwards continue our journey with the greater alacrity. Were we to reflect a little further upon this comparison, and apply it, we might pretty well discover the proper use of the gifts of grace, of which I will say nothing more at present, having elsewhere given thorough instructions on the subject.\*

(\* The author alludes to a tract of his, entitled "The Manual of True Godliness" which appeared in 1727, and contains many useful instructions.)

## II.

We have hitherto taken a view of that which may be regarded as godliness or piety, and in fact is so by most men, which nevertheless, can be no means, constitute its real essence and substance: the question then is, wherein does true godliness consist? Now though it be by no means difficult to answer this inquiry in few words, yet it is difficult, nay even impossible to impart a proper idea of it, to him who is not himself in possession of true godliness. For they are the things of the Spirit of God, which the natural man cannot understand. May the Spirit of God himself enlighten our understandings with his truth, and powerfully draw our hearts to obedience!

True godliness (eusebeia) is that inward state or disposition, which is wrought by the Holy Spirit, and the occupation of the soul, which springs from it, by which she again renders that homage and worship to the triune God, which is due to him, and which is in some measure worthy of him. It consists in filial fear and veneration, in a heartfelt confidence and faith, and in a fervent attachment and love to God, which three things are like so many essential parts of the spiritual temple, in which God is worshipped. For since he is a Spirit, it necessarily follows, that he must be worshipped not in a mere external, ceremonial, and hypocritical manner, but inwardly, heartily, in spirit and in truth, if it is to be done in a manner worthy of him, as our divine Teacher himself demonstrates. (John 4:24)

I say the Holy Spirit produces this state or disposition of the soul, whilst inwardly giving her to know, (to one soul more, and as though at once, and with great power, and to another more imperceptibly and gradually,) in a supernatural, vital, and powerful manner, the truth, glory, and loveliness of the omnipresent being of God.

This immediately produces in the soul an unspeakably profound veneration, admiration, filial

reverence, and inward humiliation of all that is within her, in the presence of the exalted Majesty of God. This glorious being appears to her to be alone great and good, and she herself, together with every other creature, utterly mean, little, and despicable. God is exalted and magnified by her, whilst she herself is abased in the deepest humility. She esteems herself dust and ashes; nay even as something less; and therefore cannot bear to see herself honored or esteemed by others. She is conscious, that to this Majesty, every knee in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, ought to bow, and to worship; and this is the object of her desire. She contemplates the Divine Being, as almost the only being, and every other, regarded in his presence, as nothing. It appears horrible and inhuman wickedness to her, to offend such a God. She would scorn a thousand worlds, rather than commit so great an evil. Hence she is most deeply ashamed, in true humility and sorrow of heart, at the retrospect of her former sins, as also at the infirmities and the self-love, which still cleave to her, the first and most subtle motions of which, are disgusting and most distressing to her, and the total annihilation of which, she ardently desires and waits for.

This veneration of God, and this mean idea, or rather total disesteem of herself and of every other creature, at the same time produces in the soul an entire mistrust of herself and of all created things, and a real faith and confidence towards God in Christ Jesus, to whom she yields, resigns, and commits herself wholly, both in body, soul, and spirit; that he may do with her, and in her, and make of her whatever he pleases, in time and eternity: hoping and trusting, that he is able and willing, and assuredly will overrule everything for her good, and his glory. It produces in the soul, a departure from herself, and from all that is not God, and an ardent hunger, thirst, and flying for refuge to, nay, a real entering and transition into Christ, with whom she inwardly unites herself; and by a continual and believing attachment, retiring into, and (abiding in him, she receives grace for grace, essential, spiritual, vital power and strength, by which she is wholly penetrated and animated; so that by degrees, all inward and outward acts, words, thoughts, and inclinations are produced and inspirited by this new principle of life. On which account, she most willingly ascribes all the good that is found in her, or may proceed from her, with the utmost inward consciousness of her own nothingness, and depravity, and with a heartfelt acknowledgement of the free grace of God, to this divine source, the vivifying spirit of the Lord Jesus in her; so that the soul can then say with truth, in the words of Saint Paul, "Now I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal.2:20) and learns to understand, in their full import, these words of Christ, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, bringeth forth much fruit: for without me, you can do nothing." (John 15:5) And in truth, this essential union of faith with Christ Jesus is the sole basis of all true godliness; and the new life which springs from it, is true godliness itself, which is therefore emphatically called in scripture, "Godliness in Christ Jesus," (2 Tim. 3:12) in order to distinguish it as something vital, powerful, and essential, from all self-made, specious,

and shadowy religion.

A simultaneous consequence of the above-mentioned inward knowledge and vision of God, is, that the whole heart is, as it were, blissfully taken captive, and entirely made willing to detach and turn away, by thorough self-denial, all its desire, pleasure, joy, and delight, and its whole affection from itself and all that is not God, and to direct and fix it all upon this alone all-worthy object, to love him solely, and to cleave unto him with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and to love nothing out of him, which cannot be truly loved in him. The ungodly (asebes) and the godly (eusebes) stand, in scripture, in direct opposition. An ungodly person is one, who is detached from God, and cleaves to himself and the creature; a godly man is one who is detached from himself and the creature, and adheres to God with all affection. His whole heart says to all that is not God, "I am not for you, and ye are not for me; ye are not the object of my desire; I can do without you all. God alone is all sufficient. He is my treasure. He is my all. He is the center of my affections. In him alone I have enough." He embraces this lovely being with all the powers of his love, and seeks in him alone pleasure, joy, consolation, and delight. He cleaves unto him in his inmost soul. He immerses himself in him, until at length, (after every intervention and partition of sin and self-love is cleared away, by the exercise of great fidelity and patient endurance, and through the powerful operation of the grace of God,) he becomes entirely one with God, or one spirit with him. (1 Cor. 6:17)

This, taken together, is otherwise called in scripture, "Walking before God, or in his presence," and is in reality nothing else than true godliness, the true service of God, or real religion, in which Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the saints and prophets of the Old Testament, as well as Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Forerunner, together with the apostles, primitive Christians, and all his true followers, in every age, have served God, as will be evident to him who refers to the subjoined passages of scripture, with a desire after truth that is according to godliness.

Gen. 5: 24, 6, 8, 9, 17:1, 39:9, Heb. 11:27, 2 Kings 20:3, Psalm 16:8, 25:15, 116: 9, 123:1,2, 1 Kings 17:1, 18:15, 2 Kings 3:14,16, John 8:29, Acts 17:27,28, 2 Cor 5:9, Phil. 3:20. Heb. 4:12,13, 12:22,23, 1 Peter 3:2-4

Now although true godliness, with reference to its origin and essence, is wholly inward, yet as a divine light, it is impossible for it to remain so concealed, as not to let its living characters, (even frequently without the soul's will or knowledge,) shine forth in the individual's whole life, speech, deportment, and conduct, which is entirely different from the life and conversation of the men of this world, and is diametrically opposed to them. He verifies, on the contrary, that saying of Christ, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; make the tree good, and its fruit will be good." Where true godliness dwells in the heart, there Jesus himself resides, and there

must necessarily a life, that is in accordance with the doctrine and the life of Jesus, be also manifested, and all his virtues shine forth: humility, meekness, love, gravity, a rejection of honor, pomp, and the treasures and pleasures of the world, patience, fortitude, kindness, mercy, temperance, and all the other virtues of Jesus Christ. For although a hypocrite may, in some measure, possess the outward semblance of these virtues, yet a truly godly man does not let his light shine the less on that account; which may be said as a warning to those in particular, who are fond of speaking of great and merely outward godliness, and in other respects, allow themselves a thousand liberties in conforming to the world: nay even look upon and despise a serious, self-denying, outward walk as hypocrisy and dissimulation, "He that saith he is in Christ, ought also to walk, even as he walked." (1 John 2:6)

From this inward disposition of the soul, or godliness, all inward exercises of virtue and acts of godliness from time to time arise, (for it comprehends them all in it,) such as the duties of humiliation before God, invocation, meditation, contemplation, adoration, thanksgiving, praise, love, resignation, etc. Since all external duties, such as hearing, reading, or conversing upon good things, praying, singing, and the like, emanate, and must necessarily proceed from such a foundation and disposition of the heart, in order to be practiced to advantage, and to deserve the name of serving God.

From what has been said, it may be easily perceived, that the principal distinction between true and false godliness lies in this, that the latter consists merely in an external appearance, form, and covering, whilst the heart, in the meantime, remains unchanged, full of the love of the world, and of self, and of every abomination: but true godliness possesses in it a divine power, and produces a thorough change in the man, powerfully withdraws his heart, affections, delight, and all the powers of his soul from all created things, attaches him to God, his origin, and translates him into a truly holy, and divine life and walk.

### III.

And ought not he, who is thus godly, to be blessed in God? Yea, he is truly blessed. He knows God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, which is eternal life.(John 17:3) The understanding, which with much weariness and anxiety, had long roved about in its utter natural darkness, groping like a blind man for the wall, and had sought truth by the deceptive light of reason, and had found only lifeless, frigid, uncertain ideas, opinions, and conjectures, then sees (without much individual exertion or seeking) "light in the light of God." (Psalm 36:10) It recognizes the truth, and him that is true; and by the contemplation of this truth, the eye of the understanding is enlightened, gladdened, and satisfied, having now reached its object and its aim. To know that God is, and that he is what he is, (Exod. 3:14.) affords I unspeakable felicity to him to whom the Son reveals it, (Matt. 11:27.) and he cannot do otherwise than heartily assent, and

say, "Yea, O Lord, it is well that thou art, and that thou art he, who thou art! Yea Amen!"

If it be bliss, as it really is, to possess all that we desire and wish, the soul that possesses true godliness, must I be truly blessed, because she unites her will with God's, which is always accomplished. Formerly she was pained and tormented in the infernal flame of her own will, which rendered her so frequently dissatisfied; for one thing or another was always wrong, in the opinion of her perverse self-will; and thus she writhed and twisted about, day and night, within herself, in doleful apprehension, care, grief, uneasiness, and anxiety, like a gnawing worm, to the injury of both body and soul: but now she has entirely and unconditionally resigned her will, in the exercise of real faith, and thorough self-denial, into the hands of God, in such a manner, that the will of God alone influences and operates in her, by which the soul is placed in a tranquil and very peaceful state.

Her will desires nothing but God; and because it possesses him, (essentially and in faith, if not always in a clear and perceptible manner,) it cannot will or desire anything besides: since God, as its proper and infinite object, fills and calms the infinite capacity of its desires. She can say with the pious patriarch Jacob, "I have all, I have enough" (Gen. 33:11) which no one else, were he even the greatest monarch upon earth, can say with truth. For no one knows what it is to have enough, but the truly pious soul, because no one has ever experienced it. People suppose indeed, that this thing, or that, would satisfy their hunger and desire; and the poor, erring, and from God departed spirit thinks to itself, "Ah, if I were in this or that particular situation, if I had this or that, if this or that were but removed, I should then be quiet and content." Yet how frequently and constantly does our faithful Creator make the man conscious, that these are only broken cisterns, and can afford no suitable food for the soul. One thing alone is needful, and that is God, in whom the truly pious soul, withdrawing all her desires, love, and affection from every other object, collects them into one; and thus the spirit arrives at its origin, center, and aim to which it belongs, and likewise to its rest and true felicity, which is also increased in the hope of its future extension and manifestation in eternal glory; (Col. 3:4) so that in this respect, we are already saved or blessed\* in hope.(Rom.8:24)(\* In German, salvation and blessedness are expressed by the same word.)

The consequence of all this is an unclouded and cheerful mind, and a well-regulated, harmonious, undisturbed, peaceful deportment, seeing, as before observed, that selfwill is broken; and hence the affections and passions are moderated, and brought into proper order, by which even the body, as is easy to suppose, is more benefitted than injured.

It would, however, require larger limits to touch upon all the supreme felicity that accompanies true godliness, even in this life, although all that could be said would be only



obscure and inadequate; and hence it is, that in order to know it, the soul must really experience it. Paul expresses the whole of it in these few words, 'Godliness is profitable for all things, (the infallible remedy and panacea,) having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' (1 Tim. 5:8)

So much at least is evident from what has been said, that it is wrong to regard true godliness as something melancholy, grievous, difficult, and vexatious; since, abstractedly considered, it is quite the reverse. It is true it occasions severe affliction, agony, and death to obdurate self-will and natural depravity: but it is this very self-will and this natural state, that makes us wretched and miserable, and must therefore be taken out of the way, and necessarily be removed, by the power and Spirit of our Saviour Jesus, in order that we may be here and eternally happy, joyful, and blessed in God.

Therefore observe here two or three of the principal reasons, why godliness appears so difficult and disagreeable, not only to the greater part of the children of this world, but perhaps also to the majority of those, who make a profession of religion. The first is, because some, and alas! too many, are too negligent and tender of themselves in denying the world, in crucifying the flesh, in mortifying their self-will, their sensual enjoyments, and every selfish pleasure, joy, affection, and gratification afforded by the creature: on which account it is impossible to attain to true peace with God, and a substantial experience of his allsufficiency. It is impossible to serve two masters. (Matt. 6:24) He that will delight himself in God, must no longer seek it in the creature; and he that seeks his pleasure in the creature, will not find it in God.

In some individuals the fault lies in a subtle but very dangerous insincerity, in secretly, yet knowingly cleaving with affection to some particular sin or creature, by which the Holy Spirit is grieved, and the heart continues uneasy, and the conscience its accusations. Others are deficient in a calm and strict attention to the heart, and to the admonitions of the indwelling Spirit of grace, and continue to live in a state of mental dissipation, and more in the senses and reason, than in the spirit, (Rom. 8:1,4,5,9,13) by which innumerable sins and selfishness's are neither recognized nor removed; add to this, that men, by listening to carnal reason, often set bounds and limits to their self-denial and sanctification, or let others do it for them; and are thus tolerably well contented with a small beginning, and with denying one particular thing; whilst they retain everything else, under the appellation of weaknesses, without seriously resisting them.

The second principal reason why a godly life appears difficult and disagreeable, even to many pious people is, that many, who though perfectly desirous of going to work with more sincerity than the former, yet often run into the contrary extreme, and are improperly too

active in that, in which others act too slothfully, inasmuch as they seek, in their own strength, to follow and be faithful to the admonitions and requirements of that Holy Spirit, to whom they have resigned themselves, instead of immediately forsaking themselves and their own activity and ability, and passing in reality, (and not merely in an ideal and imaginary manner,) by faith and love, into Jesus Christ, and spiritually and sweetly uniting and holding communion with him: in order that he who wrought in them the will, may also work in them to do according to his own good pleasure; on which account, what they perform is neither pure, complete, sincere, nor abiding; and hence the mind, notwithstanding all its legal efforts, lies prostrate under many difficulties, vexations, reproofs, and fetters. This is a very important point, when well understood, and is more prevalent amongst the pious, than might have been supposed.

True holiness and godliness is both impracticable and a stranger to the law and the natural powers of man. The vivifying Spirit of the Lord Jesus must make us new creatures, and wholly animate and influence us, that filled with this free and powerful grace of the new covenant, we may deny and overcome everything with delight, valour, and constancy, and live, in the exercise of true godliness, in the presence of the Lord. If everyone, who is in ear nest to attain true godliness, were to plunge himself into this only source of all grace and godliness, that is, into Jesus Christ, in the consciousness of his deep depravity and inability, and in heartfelt confidence, and abide in him ; truly we should then grow, flourish, and bear fruit, like trees planted by the water-brooks, and find, by vital experience, that "His commands are not grievous." (1 John 5:7)

But let no one suppose that by this, we wish to pass over the mystery of the cross, or to exclude the blessed paths of affliction, by which God leads his people, from the sphere and course of godliness: certainly not. For by so doing, we should condemn all the children of God that were before us, (Psalm 73: 15) Abraham, Job, David, Heman, Jeremiah, and all the saints, both of the Old and New Testament; all of whom (each in his measure and degree) have been exercised, tried and purified by God, both in body and soul, by various temptations and assaults of the enemy, darkness, abandonment and barrenness, distress and various other afflictions and sufferings. On the contrary, the divine saying continues true to the present day, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must not only be externally hated, reviled, and persecuted by the world, (2 Tim.3:12) but be also inwardly perfected, by a variety of temptations, crosses, and sufferings, and thus enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Acts 4:22) But notwithstanding this, all inward sufferings, temptations, and afflictions would gradually become easy, nay even pleasant to a godly soul, nor would they be able to disturb her profound peace in God, if she only wisely learnt to place her strength, delight, welfare, and salvation, solely and wholly in God and his good pleasure. I say in God and his good pleasure alone, not in herself and her own doings, not in her own ease and satisfaction: not in divine light, gifts, emotions, assurances, and the like; for

all this may, and must be often concealed and taken away from her. But God and his will never move nor change. And when the soul in her sufferings, be they what they may, can only resign herself and her salvation, in obscure faith and the profoundest self-denial, to this faithful Creator, she will certainly attain, in the degree she practices it, and in which all self-righteousness and self-assumed piety is annihilated, the peaceable fruits of righteousness and holiness (Hebrews 12:11) even in this life.

Nor do I mean, by this, to lay still further discouragements in the way of those, who are sincere in their hostility to sin, and wander about weary and heavy laden, in penitential sorrow and contrition, nor make them distrust their state, because it does not seem to them so easy: By no means. On the contrary I wish to comfort and establish them, by assuring them, that it will not always be thus; and would only remind them, that with such a disposition of heart, they must come to Jesus, in the consciousness of their misery and inability, that he may refresh them, and then make his yoke easy to them, and his burden light;(Matt. 9:28, 30.) and that since they have no power in themselves, to break through and attain to the true essence of godliness, they ought by incessant hunger and prayer of the spirit to accustom themselves to cleave to the Lord most fervently and to abide in him; for he will then infallibly grant them abundantly, by the impartation of his divine power, all that is necessary for life and true godliness. (2 Peter 1:3)

May he, who is God alone, blessed forever, and who alone can make us godly, so vitally and powerfully touch by his Spirit, the hearts of those, who read these pages, that they shall not only immediately resolve to deny themselves and all created things: but really do and perform it through him, that they may follow him and enjoy the unspeakable and eternal felicity of his divine fellowship! We must forsake ourselves, in order to apprehend him, and be apprehended of his Spirit. We must depart from ourselves, in order to enter into him. This exit and this entrance is the basis and most essential act of godliness: because by it, we restore to God what is his, I mean ourselves, thoroughly, wholly, and irrevocably; and likewise by so doing, acknowledge and accept him for what he is, that is, as our God, Creator, Redeemer, our Supreme Good, our One, and our All, forever. If this one thing, (this departure and this entrance) be neglected, our godliness is little worth; and is only a shadow without the substance.

But since the compassionate love of God in Christ Jesus, so faithfully calls us to it, let us follow this inestimable vocation of grace, in humble resignation, and by forsaking all we have and are; that so we may be made godly and blessed in him in truth, both now and forever; which is the cordial wish, and most fervent prayer to the source of all goodness,

Of, A sincere seeker after godliness.

ON DIFFERENCE AND ADVANCEMENT IN GODLINESS.

“Many are called, but few are chosen.” Matt. 20:16.

ON DIFFERENCE IN GODLINESS.

1.

It is the eternally immutable purpose and gracious will of God, although as all-sufficient in himself, he has no occasion for our worship, nor stands in need of any, (Acts 17:25.) that besides the myriads of angelic spirits, which in various hierarchies, legions, ranks, and stations, surround his throne, and contemplate, adore, and enjoy his most glorious and lovely Majesty, he should also have his church and true worshippers, from amongst the human race, and the fallen children of Adam, with whom he may unite himself, in an inward and reciprocal manner, hold converse with them, and make them partakers of his divine glory and felicity.

Hence it is, that Eternal Wisdom, whose delights are with the children of men, continually goes about, as it were, like a faithful and affectionate mother and bride, seeking such souls, who thus worship the Father, in a manner worthy of him, in spirit and in truth. But alas ! with the majority she is unsuccessful; in several she meets with some degree of attention, but not wholly, and in all things; and it is only in a very small number, that she finds free admission and permission to accomplish unhindered her divine work. In short, “many are called, but few are chosen.” Notwithstanding all this, the purpose and counsel of God standeth immutably firm: “The Father willeth such to worship him.” And it is really the case, that Wisdom has always found, still finds, and ever shall find some, out of every people and nation, at all times, and in all places, into whom she can enter, and whom she can make “friends of God,” as it is said in the Book of Wisdom 7:27

The consequence of this very various behavior of individuals,\* with respect to the gracious calling of God, is, that there is such a remarkable difference observable amongst the pious in the church of Christ, (for with the multitude of the worldly-minded and the hypocritical, we have here nothing to do,) particularly since the declension from the first love and power; since the most of them stop short at some beginnings of Christianity, without seriously endeavoring to advance continually; and hence they lead a feeblener, more common, and if I may so express myself, more external life in the sight of God and man; but others, and those the fewest in number, have gone forward faithfully, and have been drawn and led by the grace of God, to something more substantial and inward; in consequence of which, they are diligent in leading a more holy strict, and inward life. With respect to this, I might, it is true, have explained and expressed myself more briefly; and in a mode of expression very customary in the Holy Scriptures, and in the writings of the primitive fathers, have denominated the former imperfect, and the latter (in its proper sense) perfect; but because there are many in these truly imperfect Christian times, so unwilling to hear of perfection, that it is to be feared they dread the thing itself, as much as they do the word, I have sought to avoid this stumbling-stone.

\* By this it is not meant to deny, that God may have his sacred purposes, in bringing particular souls to particular states of sanctification and union: but if all would recognize within them the purpose and calling of God, and faithfully answer it, all men would be saints.

On the present occasion, we will only endeavor briefly to make that difference, which exists amongst the pious in the present day, apparent; if haply someone may learn by it to know himself, and under the various external minor points and accidents, with which Christianity is nowadays surrounded and enveloped, begin to seek the inward germ of the hidden life.

The greater part of those, who are called of God, stand still in their course, after having experienced the primary effects of repentance, in grief and sorrow for their sins, and anxiety at the dangerous state of their souls, in a hunger and thirst after the grace of God in Christ, and in turning from the dead works of grosser sins, to an outwardly virtuous and pious life and conversation; supposing that such a change having once taken place, that which the Scripture calls conversion and regeneration is already accomplished; and if, besides this, the heart has occasionally felt a degree of comfort, relish, and delight, the man thinks his state the more secure, supposing that he has now really found the treasure, and that having surmounted every obstacle, he has attained to fellowship with God; and hence he appropriates to himself the precious promises, titles, and privileges, which God gives in his word to real Christians.

Here the wheels of their chariot stand still. I do not mean to say that this is invariably their sentiment, purpose, and intention, as though they had attained the end of sanctification, and might betake themselves to rest: but that their supposed advancement is a standing still, if not a going back. Observe here in what this advancement almost invariably consists. They exercise themselves in reading, hearing, conversing, singing, vocal prayers, and such like duties and devotions, which are profitable in themselves; they reflect on the truths of God, and strive to form a conception of them, or (as it is customary to say,) to attain a great degree of knowledge, and seek, in such and similar activity, their delight and enjoyment. And when they are conscious of some particular transient susceptibility or good inclination in the affections, they rejoice, esteem it very edifying, and often know not how to extol it sufficiently; but if these are wanting, they complain, as if God had forsaken them, and are even ready to compare their situation with Job, David, and other saints, in their painful inward sufferings. I know not if the conduct and advancement of many of the pious consist in anything else; for with respect to those improprieties which remain after the first change, they continue in their former strength. I believe, indeed, that they are occasionally resisted in some degree, but never overcome, and hence they regard such things as faults and frailties, from which they do not expect to be delivered during the present life.

Now if we pay attention to the life and conversation of such persons, we shall find them tolerably devout in their religious exercises, but the rest of their time, and in their daily intercourse with their fellow-creatures, pretty free and unrestrained. They do not regard it as anything particularly improper, to have their minds engrossed by a multiplicity of worldly and unnecessary affairs, and to lay up riches and treasures for the future. They think themselves at

liberty largely to discuss indifferent matters, and to associate unnecessarily with the people of the world: they regard it as allowable, to please their senses, in seeing, hearing, tasting, and the like: I will not say anything with respect to thoughts; for they are universally little attended to by them, and are left to wander far and wide, for hours and days together, without much scruple, and without an aim. And thus the heart is in a measure divided, although they do not always know it. For ah ! how little care is manifested by such well-meaning individuals, to prevent their delight or affections from straying to some particular created object, and from seeking in them their gratification, solace, and joy ! how negligent are they, whilst following their own will and their own opinions, first in one thing and then in another, frequently under the most plausible pretenses; so that the difference between them and the world is often scarcely perceptible.

Is not this the truth? and will not many an one who reads this, being convinced in his conscience, be obliged to answer, Yes? For tell me, is it not sufficiently evident, that such characters do not really feel within themselves the power of faith and godliness for the overcoming the world, both within and without; for the extermination of sin, of the inordinate affections and passions, of self-love, self-seeking, and self-will, and for the destruction of the life of self; and that they do not yet possess within them the great privilege of the new covenant, which is, that God himself will write his law in their inward parts, (Heb. 8:10.) and that henceforth they should fulfill the will of God, not from the mere constraint and compulsion of a burdened conscience, with respect to some particular things, but from fervent love and affection, and from the free inclination of the heart?

Such characters, therefore, do not attain to true and lasting peace, acquaintance, and fellowship with God in Christ: and however much may have been spoken or written on the subject, and upon the enjoyment of peace, joy, and blessedness in Christ, yet these poor people frequently know very little about it from their own experience, except from having perhaps read or heard of it from other pious persons; or rather, notwithstanding this, with all their devotional duties and exercises, they are inwardly kept in a state of much difficulty and secret reproof and dissatisfaction of conscience. But where some degree of pleasure and joy is experienced in the performance of any particular duty and undertaking, which is apparently good, yet it is only superficial, and not lasting, much less pure; and it is not long before the customary accusations of conscience again commence, where its voice is listened to. For whatever is done in this state, results generally, though often unconsciously, from the man's own natural powers and efforts, which soon droop again, and only occasion either despondency, or else much self-complacency his own righteousness ; but bring little glory to God, and no true and lasting peace to the mind.

We ought therefore, not without reason, to reflect and inquire with reference to this, how it is possible, that men possessing light and grace from God, and who are desirous not to deceive themselves, (for we speak here solely of such characters,) can think or believe that their state is right and acceptable with God, since its wretchedness and infirmity is so obvious in every respect? Assuredly no other cause can be assigned, than the want of observation and attention to what passes within them. For because they allow themselves to be so frequently drawn

away, and enticed from the reproofs of the grace and Spirit of God, and after having once obeyed its call and impulse in their first repentance, they go out of their hearts so to speak, into their thinking or reasoning part, and form or receive conceptions and ideas of Christianity, and divine truth, according to the feeble and insufficient light they have obtained by the efforts of their own reason, which ideas and conceptions must necessarily be very weak, limited, and insufficient; and then, consequently, regulate and bound their Christianity, although with a good intention, according to the ideas they have once formed, in which many fix themselves so firmly, that they regard as erroneous, and reject all that does not accord with, or goes beyond them: and living thus turned outwards from the interior into the exterior, and from the light and admonition of the Spirit into human reason, they never attain, either to a true and thorough knowledge of their inward depravity, and of a multitude of secret selfish failings in every point, nor to an insight into the truth as it is in Jesus, and that strict, holy, retired, and hidden life, which is required in a true Christian, nor to an experimental knowledge of the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in his true followers, by which they are prepared for such a holy and godly life.

I will not, however, accuse all such characters of a knowing and willful infidelity or insincerity, and thus condemn their state entirely: I would only briefly point out its great deficiency, impurity, and insufficiency, if haply one or other, through the co-operation of divine grace, might come more to himself, and ask more minutely, for the old and only right way of dying to self and all created things, and of the hidden life with Christ in God. For alas ! ought we not to be grieved and pained to see such well-meaning individuals running in such an endless circle, and satisfying themselves in such a manner with the outward shell, or a mere rational knowledge, and with some particular bodily exercises, duties, and beginnings of Christianity, so that all advancement is forgotten over it, and the true inward fruit of Christianity never known, nor its blessedness in fervent fellowship with God enjoyed?

## II

There are however, God be praised, still some to be met with, here and there, in the present day, who find no rest nor satisfaction in such a mere beginning and mixed state; but are desirous, with the young ruler, mentioned in the gospel, of becoming perfect, (to use the words of the Lord Jesus,) and to this end devote and dedicate themselves in a particular manner to the Lord Jesus, to be his true followers; who by his grace, are also diligent in the practice of a real, inward, and stricter Christianity, and seek to exercise themselves in it, with all their hearts, as in their only necessary work, although even amongst them a great difference is again observable, with respect to their progress and their states. I will touch a little upon their transition into a better state, and its properties; in which, however, I must be very brief, because of my narrow limits.

This breaking through, and transition of such souls, to something substantial and inward, generally takes place in the following manner. All external and internal employment and self-activity, on which the soul's Christianity, though without her knowledge, had hitherto mostly rested, is rendered disagreeable to and taken from her; which in some cases occurs more

rapidly than in others; she can no longer continue her reading, meditation, hearing, and conversing, her vocal prayers, and the like; partly because the understanding, which had been previously so active, becomes gradually incapable, slothful, and disinclined to operate, reflect, and deliberate, as formerly; and partly because the memory can no longer furnish the conceptions, ideas, and subjects, with which it was tilled, nor receive and retain others. And all that such a soul undertakes, or is able to undertake of inward or outward employment and exercises of her own is performed with much difficulty, and has no longer such an effect upon the heart and will as it had before; but instead of the previous pleasure, relish, and sweetness, all becomes barren, ineffectual, and even disagreeable, and vexatious. She perceives in her, on the contrary, either immediately or in course of time, a more than ordinary inclination, not only to outward tranquility and solitude, but also more especially, to inward calmness, or passiveness, with a simple, fervent disinclination to, and forgetfulness of everything created, and a secret soft, and tender inclination to God, and a childlike attention of faith to his presence in her, which latter must be very carefully cherished. Now when the soul resigns herself to this guidance, which is so strange to the activity of reason, and yet so blissful; and to this inward and divine attraction, and is obedient to it, she will find her salvation in this rest and tranquility; (Isaiah 30:15) since by this, she is weaned from all her former aberrations, and the workings of human reason, that she may pay attention in her interior, and in humble stillness, to the secret admonitions and instructions of eternal Truth in her center; and instead of being occupied with a multiplicity of minor things, she is now directed to the hidden life with Christ in God, which cannot be attained otherwise than by a continual dying with Christ to self and every other creature.

And with this, therefore, all sophisticated, presumptuous, and external plausibility in Christianity, by which the man was able to maintain his credit, either with the world, or in his own eyes, gradually falls away of itself, and the soul begins to exhibit a more childlike disposition, and to follow the simple, despised, and hidden suffering life of Jesus Christ, in which very different lessons will be given her than before. She must learn to love the sufferings, poverty, and reproach of Christ; and on the contrary, avoid and flee, as from things of a very suspicious nature, the ease and gratification of flesh and sense, the riches and treasures of the earth, together with all worldly honor and dignity. Such individuals are then reprov'd, not only for evil works, but also for an intention not entirely pure, even in good actions. The heart must then be thoroughly and entirely divested of all creature attachment, and of all, even the most secret pleasure, joy, and delight, and be gradually turned away from everything that is not God: so that a single unnecessary or inconsiderate word, even in good and spiritual things, or a short but voluntary and unnecessary wandering of mind, care, or sorrow, is not overlooked. The soul is then no longer at liberty to see and hear, go and stay, act and do what and how it pleases her; she now perceives, that she has one over her and in her, to whom she must attend, and to whom her will must be made subject by entire resignation. A subtle obstinacy, inordinate emotions of the mind, self-complacency, a presuming upon the good that she speaks, performs, or enjoys, may grieve this tender guest. And therefore whenever she thus finds herself in self-seeking, she departs from herself, in real self-denial and mortification, for the sake of the love of God. In short, the language of such souls is, "I die daily," (I Cor. 15:31) hourly, and every



instant; so that by the various afflictions and sufferings which befall her from within and without, according to the all wise guidance of God, the life of self is totally destroyed.

This sounds hard and severe, nay, it even seems to be impossible; but now observe, how it becomes easy and pleasing to such souls. They live, at the same time, in secret with Christ in God, and in his presence; and God lives and dwells in them, and inwardly fits and enables them for everything. That which leaves them of corrupt nature, and what they lose in the exterior and in the creature, they find again in God, a hundred fold. (Matt. 19:29) The more they are estranged from and dead to the creature, by continual self-denial, the nearer they necessarily approach unto God and his life, and are known of him and admitted to a hidden walk and converse with him. Previously, the creature lived in them, and they in the creature. God was, as it were, dead to them, and as though he were not. Now, on the contrary, God lives in them, and they live in God; whilst all besides, and they themselves also, with respect to their own life, and as in reference to them, are as though they were not. Like as they formerly sought and possessed life in the creature and in themselves, and now, as aforesaid, die and are dead to this wretched life, they now find in the center of their souls, true life and being, peace, joy, comfort, and delight, to which they must ardently cleave, by abstracting their affections from everything else, turning inwards into God, and living in him, in their hidden center.

And thus the words of the apostle are verified in them, by vital experience that "God is not far from any one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:27, 28.) not only according to his universal, but also according to his particular and indwelling presence. And thus they inwardly live in God, and before him, as a fish in the water, or a bird in the air; not in mere idea, and imagination, but their spirits really and essentially imbibe, by unceasing prayer or the hunger of faith, and by drawing near to God, (as the breathing of the Spirit,) divine life and strength from him, faith and love, the life of God is imparted to them, and they become partakers of his divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4) Thus they live, with a meek and quiet spirit, in a simple, resigned, innocent, and child-like state, in the presence of God, though not always in sight and enjoyment, yet in faith and reality; so that even as they die to all things, with Christ, they also live in a hidden manner, with Christ in God.

Yes, truly hidden ! so that prudent reason overlooks this life; the senses are ignorant of it, the carnal eye perceives nothing of it; poverty, contempt, and suffering are three coverings, which externally conceal it from the world which does not imagine or believe, that a king's daughter, (Psalm 45:14) arrayed with unspeakable inward glory, is concealed beneath them. She therefore looks upon such characters, as a poor, miserable, despised, and afflicted race, as a sect, which is everywhere spoken against, as mean, purblind, and foolish people that only occasion themselves such a wretched life, and so much suffering and tribulation. And although the glory that is concealed within, breaks forth in a variety of divine virtues, like so many rays of light, so that their life of self-denial, and their renunciation of the world, its riches, honors, and its pleasures, their resigned, lowly, child-like, innocent, ingenuous, and artless deportment is apparent to every one; yet this is a form and comeliness which does not suit the world and blinded reason, but which, on the contrary, it often ridicules. Nay, what is still more, they appear even to other pious people, who judge more according to the outward sense and

reason, and govern their religious life more by it than by the Spirit, often black as the tents of Kedar, (Sol. Song 1: 5, 6) as the curtains of Solomon; being ignorant, that underneath this outward garb, they have inwardly hidden their beauty and loveliness; so that their mother's children are often angry with such souls, who without making any great outward show and appearance, only strive, in quiet abstraction, to keep the vineyard of their own hearts; and thus they continue "the hidden ones" of the land: (Psalm 35:20, 83:4) their best part is not seen, their divine wisdom is hid; (1 Cor. 2:7) their communion with Christ is hid, their intimate walk with God, and their life in God is hid; (Col. 3:3) the enjoyment of so much delight, peace, joy and blessedness, which flows from it, is hid. In short, their life is a life in the spirit, (Rom. 8:1, 4, 9) and all their glory, rank, and excellence (Psalm 45:14.) is inwardly hid in God.

That such divinely sanctified souls, who seek to follow the Lamb most closely, wherever he leads them, by the most thorough denial of themselves and of everything besides, and by the most fervent and continual adherence to God, and by such an abstracted walk before the Lord, and let their sanctification be perfected here: (2 Cor. 7:1) that such souls, I say, have assuredly and infallibly to expect extremely great and precious privileges and glory, in time and eternity, is incontrovertible from many testimonies of Scripture, of which for the sake of brevity, I will only adduce a few, requesting the devout reader to refer to them, and to meditate further upon them, in the presence of God. Numbers 7: 6, 7, 8, Deut. 10: 8, 9, Psalm 45: 14, 15, 65: 5, Song of Songs 6: 9, 10, Jer. 35, Lamentations 4: 7, Mal. 3:3, Matt. 19: 27, 28, Luke 2:37, John 14, 15:15, 1 Cor. 2: 6, 15:41. Rev. 14:15. etc.

Let no one think it is a small thing, when he is conscious in his heart, of a secret inclination, drawing and affection for a peculiarly retired, serious, strict, and inward life before God, but accept it as a peculiar grace and holy vocation of God, and esteem it as a great privilege, and as something very blessed, which God will condescend to grant him in time and eternity. I repeat for this purpose once more, the marks of such a calling, which amongst others that might be mentioned, are principally these; when a person finds no rest or satisfaction in the mixed life of the generality of the pious, but is reprov'd and has a disrelish for even the most latent sins, imperfections, secret attachment to created things, and all selfishness, self-love, self-will, and self-complacency; when on the contrary, he is inwardly conscious of something attractive and alluring, so that he would gladly be united with God, in the closest and most intimate manner, and live before him, in a state of abstraction from the world; when the soul is divested and deprived of her former external activity, with regard to reason and the senses; and no longer feels within her any inclination, nourishment, or excitement in her wonted exercises and employments, or in consideration and meditation; but in opposition to this, perceives within her a drawing and inclination to inward simplicity, resignation, and composure; and to an universal and tender devotion and attention to God, who is present with her, without any particular exercise of her thinking powers, etc.

The first Christians, in the times of the apostles and their immediate successors, were evidently such a chosen generation and royal priesthood, such a peculiar people, (1 Pet. 2: 9) and applied themselves in earnest to a simple, abstracted, and godly life; as might be sufficiently demonstrated from the writings of the apostles, and the testimonies of the

primitive fathers. But my limits do not allow me to enlarge upon this point, and therefore, I refer the reader to “Arnold’s Delineation of the Primitive Christians”, and especially to his “True Representation of the Inward Christianity of the Ancients”, where numerous proofs of it may be met with.

But by degrees, the first love and zeal of many, and in time, of the greater part, began to cool; so that they everywhere contented themselves either with the mere outward profession, or else with a small beginning of grace; and where they were not kept in a state of watchfulness by persecution, fire, and sword, they frequently suffered themselves to be seduced into the external element of this world, and into a multiplicity of secular cares and undertakings; so that little difference could be perceived between them and the heathen amongst whom they dwelt; which lukewarmness and declension obtained, as it were, possession and firm footing in the church, during the time (so delightful to sense and reason) of the celebrated emperor Constantine the great; and the life of the greater part of the Christians was no longer the ancient hidden life of Christ in God, but an outwardly splendid and pompous life: no more an inwardly real Christianity, but an outwardly seeming Christianity.

Still there have been in all ages, a few select and precious souls, who whilst finding no rest for their souls and consciences in the lukewarm and corrupted life of the generality, dedicated and consecrated themselves, in a particular manner, to the service of God, and made, above others, their whole work and profession (as was only reasonable) consist in exercising themselves with all diligence, in this abstracted, godly, and hidden life, whilst slighting everything, that might in any manner impede or render them slothful in their serious course. Amongst the rest, there were also many devout young persons of both sexes,\* whose only care was, how they might please the Lord, and be holy, both in body and spirit, that thus they might cleave unto the Lord with greater liberty; there were likewise those, who are generally called “Ascetics,” (or such as exercise themselves in godliness,) who, being desirous, according to the admonition of the Lord Jesus, (Matt. 9:3) of being perfect, refrained from all unnecessary association with mankind, and from superfluous concerns: and frequently, at the divine call, sold all that they had, and distributed it amongst the poor, and afterwards lived a peaceable life, in a small habitation or apartment, working a little with their hands, and employing all the rest of their time in dying unto all things, by means of thorough self-denial, and in leading a hidden life in God, by constant prayer and communication with him.

\* Of such, Justin Martyr boasted before the Emperor, about the year 130, in the following terms: “There are many amongst us, of both sexes, who live a life of singleness and chastity till their old age, after having followed from their infancy the doctrine of Christ. (Matt. 19:11) I for my part assert that I can produce instances of this from amongst people of all classes. Apol. ii.

Another shortly after him wrote openly as follows: “there are many amongst us, both men and women, who grow old in a single life; because they hope in such a state to be nearer to God.” Athenag. Apol. page 36. And Augustine says, “It is now scarcely a matter of surprise, that so many young men and women despise marriage, and live in chastity.” De ver. Relig. Cap. iii. See also Arnold’s delineation, sec. 4, Cap 3, See also Arnold’s delineation, section 4, cap 5.

And when the lukewarmness and declension to that which is external became so general and so great, many thousands, in order not to be carried away with it, nor suffer any diminution in the strictness of their walk, by the slothful and worldly life of other Christians, fled from the common intercourse with men, and retired into remote and desert places, according to the divine will, and exercised themselves, day and night, with all diligence, in such a holy inward and hidden life before God, and in his presence. It is not my object and intention to bring forward and recommend the outward mode of life, the bodily exercises, or any other peculiarities of these or the holy individuals before-mentioned; since they had themselves no general rule, nor any particular method; and in course of time, whilst the darkness continually increased, fell also by degrees, into outward observances and human folly: my intention is merely to show, that by these devoted souls and solitaries, such as they continued to be till the fifth century, primitive, inward, and powerful religion, was principally maintained and propagated.\* And even in the succeeding wretched times, God has always had his "hidden ones," (1 Kings 19:18, Psalm 83:4) as may be seen by reference to the Catal. Testim. Veritatis, and in other books, such as Arnold's Theol. Myst. cap. xv

\* As may be seen in the lives of the primitive fathers Anthony Hilarion, and others, particularly in the writings of Macarius, Ephraim Syrus, Nilus, and also of Cassian, Climacus, etc.

Amongst those elect and God-devoted souls are also particularly to be reckoned those, who are generally called "Mystics," (that is, secret or hidden,) whose writings, next the Holy Scriptures, contain a true definition of real inward Christianity and genuine divinity.\*

\* In a work of the author's, entitled "The Lives of the Saints" in three volumes quarto, he has collected a variety of facts and information on this subject, to which the reader is referred.

It is true, that most of them lived and were known with their writings in the Romish church; yet in bearing testimony to the truth, I must say, that the sincere amongst them were more evangelical and reformed than most protestants: I mean to say, they were real inward Christians, who did not continue clinging to externals, but served and worshipped God in spirit and in truth, by withdrawing their affections and confidence from all created things, from themselves, and from all their own works, through true faith and union with God in Christ. And although I do not approve nor defend all the minor points and external incidents that occur in such writings, yet it is certain, that more divine unction, light, counsel, comfort, and peace, for a soul that is seeking after God, is to be found in a single page of the true mystic writings, than is often contained in many folio volumes of weak and watery school divinity, as enlightened divines amongst the protestants themselves concur in testifying. But whence comes it that such valuable works are generally so little esteemed and used? Is it not because an inquisitive curiosity does not find food in them, and that the nature of the old man, and the life of self is too severely attacked, and that they do not require to be reasoned and speculated upon, like

other books, which are accommodated to the taste of the old Adam, but insist upon mortification and self-denial? But as many pious divines amongst the Protestants themselves, have rescued and defended the divine truths, which are to be found in these writings, I again turn myself to those select souls, who feel themselves called to this inward and stricter hidden life.

### III

#### 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.

ON THE SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE,  
FORM AND POWER  
**OF GODLINESS,**  
IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

“Having the form of godliness, but denying its power.”  
2 Tim. 3:5

ON THE SHADOW, etc. OF GODLINESS.

My dear friend,

If I were to communicate to you my thoughts on the contents of the manuscript, which has been sent me, I should say briefly, that all that which is not internal, and has not God himself in Christ, as its foundation and source, can only be called the mere shadow, and not the substance and essence of godliness. From this general proposition, it is not difficult to deduce all that I have otherwise to say upon the subject.

FIRST. When we conduct or show ourselves before men, in conversation, action, or gesture otherwise than we mean, or different to what we are in reality or wish to be, however secretly or subtly this may take place, we do not walk in simplicity; it is falsehood, and not truth; or at least it is something assumed and dissembled; a shadow and not the substance: an abomination in the sight of God.

It is not only wrong, to show ourselves better than we are, but it is an improper affectation, nay, often a vain desire of being better thought of, when we represent ourselves, whether in words or otherwise, to be poorer, more miserable, and worse than we believe and feel ourselves to be.

I have purposely employed above, the expression, “are or wish to be”, for a person that is evil, proud, irritable, etc., but still sincerely wishes to possess the opposite virtues, ought according to the divine law, and his own conscience, to resist the evil and suppress it, that it may not break forth: and in doing this, he neither dissembles nor acts the hypocrite; on the contrary, he would be guilty of dissimulation, if he suffered it to break forth; since he purposes and wishes in his heart what is good, and not what is evil. But if such a one, who suppresses the evil that is within him, for instance, anger, and behaves himself meekly, were to imagine on this account, that he already essentially possessed the virtue of meekness, or should seek to be esteemed by others, as a meek character, he would be deceiving himself. He has the appearance, but does not yet possess the substance of this virtue.

“Oh my God, how much does hypocrisy, formality, and dissimulation pervade fallen and perverted man! And how little are we aware of this abomination in ourselves, since by reason of the thick darkness and confusion which fills our minds, we do not perceive what is in them, because we remain so little with ourselves, and abide still less with thee! Teach me, God, who art so inexpressibly near me, both outwardly and inwardly, teach me to walk under the observation of thine eye, in the pure light of thy truth, that I may practice simplicity in all my actions and deportment.”

SECONDLY. It follows from the above general proposition, that all the duties which are included in serving God, and which have not real devotion of heart and the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth for their basis and origin, are nothing more than a shadow, an outward semblance, a form of godliness, but not the substance.

Hence I remark, that it is not good for a devout person, who walks in the spirit, to engage in too many religious exercises, because by this means, the inward power and devotional feeling is easily weakened and wearied; but he must attend and apply himself with so much the more circumspection and heartfelt devotion to the fewer and more moderate exercises, which he retains.

However, if there be but sincere devotion of the heart in all our external religious duties: our works are then no mere and vain shadow, but acceptable to God in their degree; even

supposing that we have not yet attained to the worshipping of God in spirit and truth, (taken in its fullest sense,) and at which we cannot arrive by our own efforts.

THIRDLY. We may infer from hence, that all light or knowledge of God and divine truth, which is communicated to us, either immediately, from without, or which we attain by the efforts of our own reason, or if, after receiving some substantial light of truth from God in our center or understanding, we transfer it into our imagination and reason, and form to ourselves ideas of it, draw consequences or inferences from it, and obtain some measure of light or knowledge by our own efforts: yet though it were even concerning the most spiritual and inward ways of Christianity, all this light and knowledge, however profound, beautiful, pleasant, and inward it might appear to us to be, in so far as it is only a form and not the substance of the truth, is a counterfeit and imitation, a portraiture, the work of our own hands, in which self-love often takes more delight than in the original, or which, taken in its best sense, is only a speculative truth; that is, when the substantially acquired knowledge of the truth within, reflects itself, and represents itself in the mirror of the imagination, and thus the individual contemplates a beauteous object in this mirror, but not the object itself.

By this, I by no means intend to reject any good external means whatever, or any attained knowledge in its right use and due season; for this would be going too far; I only wish to show that there is a difference between the means and the end, the form and image, and the substance. The form can represent to us the substance or original, and incite us to love it; the means may lead us to the end proposed, without which we perhaps never should arrive at it; the making use of them in proper order and degree, is very useful and laudable, but it is Imprudent and dangerous to stop there, as if it was the end, and the substance of the thing itself.

Speculative or reflective knowledge is the production of our reason, (or operative understanding,) and there are various kinds of such knowledge, according to the individual's state; but substantial and contemplative knowledge is the effect of the pure or passive understanding. Reflective knowledge of the truth, is a more or less laborious, speculative cogitation, effort, and operation of our understanding or reason, and has never the essential truth before its eyes, but merely an image of the truth, as in a mirror; but contemplative knowledge of the truth, is a very easy, direct vision, and extremely simple act of our understanding, if that can be called an act, when our eye sees and enjoys the light; and he that possesses this contemplative knowledge, has also the substance of the truth, according to the measure of his grace and illumination.

Notwithstanding all this, let it be well observed, that I by no means reject reflective knowledge entirely, and without distinction; for God has given us a capacity for this purpose, which is our imagination and reason. A soul that seeks God and his truth, may occasionally be much supported and assisted in her course, by means of a good meditation. Nor could enlightened souls ever make known the truth to others, if they did not in some degree make use of their active understanding, and declare the truth in a more or less figurative manner. It is true, that during the states or paths of purifying suffering, all previously acquired reflective

knowledge, seems, as it were, to fall away and vanish; for where fruit is to be produced, the blossom must first fall off; if the substance is to enter the heart, and truth present itself there, the image in the mirror must be covered up, that the sight may be turned away from and into it. But even this is frequently restored to us, in the divine good pleasure, and that too, in a manner much more pure, beautiful, and lively; and after we ourselves, and the powers of our souls with their operation, have been purified. God grants us occasionally a holy diversion and excursion of this kind; yea, he sometimes leads us out to look at his paintings and delineations, and then again inwards to contemplate the original and substance of truth; and thus going in and out with our Shepherd, we everywhere find food and pasture. But letting seven years too soon? (Gen. 29:25-27) That which is sensible, has certainly some resemblance to that which is really spiritual; but they are not therefore one and the same thing.

FINALLY. We may also observe on this subject, that all our inward acts of prayer and devotion, of collectedness, humiliation, resignation, adoration, love, etc., in so far as they proceed solely from ourselves: in short, all that is not God nor God's work in us, when viewed in its proper light, is something self-made, and only a form, but not the substance of godliness.

When a soul, by passing through many trials and paths of humiliation, is in some measure purified, and hence is permitted to experience in her center, the pure and substantial operation of God: everything that she had previously done or experienced, even her most inward and simple activity in communion with God, (notwithstanding the grace that co-operated with it,) then appears sensual, gross, and imperfect, as something affected and not real, and as something human, mixed, and of no value. Yet that which preceded this state is not to be altogether rejected as evil, or even to be disesteemed; much less ought it to be regarded in this light, with reference to other seeking souls, who perhaps may not have experienced similar purely divine operations. For the soul that experiences them, regards them not as they are good in their kind and season, but as they are in comparison with the sublimity and purity of the substantial operation of God, which she then experiences, with reference to which, as before said, all appears to her mean and unsubstantial. Such a judgment is good and proper for her, but not always good and useful for others.

It is not to be believed how feeble, worthless, and faulty is all that we do, even that which is most inward and spiritual, in so far as it proceeds from ourselves. It is therefore very advisable for a devout soul, that in her intercourse with God, she gradually learn to cease from her own gross works, to keep a Sabbath to the Lord, and let him work in her by his Spirit; and that when in advancing further in the experience of the pure operation of divine influence, she perceives a secret displeasure and disgust at her own works, and on the contrary a peaceful inclination to inward passiveness, she resign herself, without apprehending any danger, to this guidance of divine Wisdom.

But lest any unmodified person should from hence derive occasion for a state of religious apathy and false vacuity, reference may be made to what has been already said in the preceding pages and the following general rule may also be observed, except in an extraordinary state of suffering: that as soon as God works, we must be passive; and when we

are not conscious of his operation, we must wait for it, as before said, in a state of sacred calm and solemnity in his presence. It is, however, not advisable to be altogether quiet at such times, and not do anything. We may, nay we must work at such times, when grace gives us liberty to do so, but as our state may require, altogether simply and fervently, with the heart and affections, meekly and resigned, as in the presence of God, arid ready, at the least hint or consciousness of his operation, to be passive, and make room for him.

“O Lord, thou all sufficient and infinite Being, the supreme Being, the sole Being, yea, more than Being! Thou alone canst say with effect, *I am*; and this ‘I am’ is so unlimited and undoubtedly true, that no oath can be found, which places the truth more beyond all doubt, than when this word proceeds from thy mouth, ‘I am.’ ‘I live.’ ”

“Yea, amen ! *thou art*” My spirit bows before thee, and my inmost soul confesses unto thee, that thou art. How blessed do I esteem myself, that thou art, and that thou canst not cease to be! How blessed am I, that I know that *God is*, and that I can make this confession, that *God is*! Hear it all ye creatures, *God is*! I rejoice O my God, that thou art; it delights me that thou art. What a blessed and happy thing it is that thou art so good, that thou art, and that thou art he, who thou art! I had rather that I were not, and that all things were not, than that thou shouldst not be.”

“Yet what am I, and what are all things? Am I in reality and is all in reality? What is this *I*? What is this all? We are only because thou art, and because thou wilt that we should be; poor diminutive beings, that in comparison with thee, and in the presence of thy Being, are a form and a shadow, and not worthy to be called a being. My being, and that of all things, vanishes, as it were, before thy Being, much sooner, and in a greater degree, than a taper in the full blaze of the sun, which is not seen, and is so overpowered by the greater light, that it is as though it were not. O that thou wouldst thus overcome and annihilate me, and that the sight of thee might thus supersede, and as it were, extinguish me; thy grandeur, my meanness; thy immense light, my twinkling light, yea, my obscurity; thy most pure operation, my defective working; thy all, my nothing !”

“I am only a form, a wretched shadow, when thou art not in me, and I in thee; when thou art not the basis and the being of my being. All that I know, and all I contemplate, is only a self-created, lifeless nonentity, or at least an uncertain image, an unsatisfying, transient form and shadow, if thou thyself dost not enlighten me, and if thou do not grant me thyself to contemplate. O thou solely substantial truth ! all that I seek, all that I love, all that I possess is only a shadow and semblance, but no reality, if I do not seek thee, and love thee, and possess thee, O thou, who art the solely substantial good, the joy, the delight, and the glory of my soul ! all my works, yea, every motion and effort of my internal and external powers, are shadow and not substance, unless thou thyself art the origin and mover of them, O thou original, solely essential good, and infinitely prolific life!”

“But what do I say? Without thee, I am not only a form and a shadow, but a wretched and horrible monster; and when I work of myself, all my works, however good and holy they may

appear, are hateful, nay, even sinful in thy sight; not only because they proceed from me, who am altogether sinful and corrupt; but also because I seek, please, and exalt myself in all things, under the most plausible pretexts and appearances, and ascribe to myself the glory which most justly belongs to thee. O what a dreadful thing is self ! I justly abhor myself, when I behold myself in the immediate presence of thy purity. Self-pervades me; I am utter selfishness; all my outward and inward motions are selfishness; all my virtues, as proceeding from me, are selfish and impure in thy sight.”

“O that I might be no more, nor have any longer in myself, either life, or understanding, or will, or thought, or any other motion; and that thou, my God, my Jesus, might be and work all in me! Let that, O Lord ! which thou thyself dost not speak and work in me, be forever silent, and cease. Condemn and destroy in me, all which thou art not, and which is not thee. Take entire possession of the place which I now occupy, and do in me and through me, what is pleasing in thy sight. Let me exist no more, but thou alone be all in all; and thus do thou lead me entirely out of myself, and of all that belongs to me, into thee, O my God, my origin, and my end ! Then shall I no longer be in a state of nonexistence and appearance, but in reality, and delivered from every evil, to the eternal glory of thy name ! Amen.