

Life of the Spirit

VOLUME III

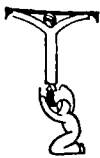
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RESIGNATION

By

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THE object of our creation is union with God and that is the sole reason that justifies our being here. God's creation of us is a very great mystery; we cannot understand how this union can possibly be. God's infinite perfection, our imperfection; God in his splendour, we in our misery. And yet we believe, and the bridge that unites us is our blessed Lord.

We must ask ourselves how it is possible that God can be united to such worthless human beings. We could understand union as a reward to chosen spirits, faithful, undeviating, precious souls, but that *we* should be of that company seems astonishing. If it were a reward for heroic sanctity; but just ordinary souls. . . . And yet we realise that union is not easier between precious things, but between yielding things. It is impossible to mix diamonds with anything. It may be our very worthlessness that makes union possible. 'Thrice have I besought the Lord that the sting of my flesh might depart from me, and the answer was, 'No, my strength is made perfect in your infirmity'. *Why* was Lazarus let die?—to show the glory of God. God's glory was shown by the dead being brought back to life. Union between ourselves and God is made reasonable by our weakness. 'I stand and knock at the door; if *any* man open to me'. There you are—*any man*. Infinite in his heights and in our depths. God's mercy-seat was placed *over* the Tables of the Law, God's mercy *over* his commandments; and our blessed Lord intends by that to help us to realise that our weakness has its place in his scheme. He will always have mercy on one condition—that we *yield*. Ninety-nine need not penance and he leaves them and looks for weakness—weakness needs him and he will go to look for it. He leaves the coins so orderly on the dresser; he will leave them lonely—the least he searches for. It seems as though there were something in that so opposite to himself which draws him to it. It is the sinful world that drew him to it; he left the sinless spheres. God making capital out of—or *we* making capital out of—our very weakness. It is rather the weak he seeks; *their* greater need appeals to him. Whether we are worth while is

seemingly not in the question. God cannot search for anything because of *itself*; imperfect it must be and therefore it must be because of himself; not what we are but what *he* is: for his own sake. He is moved by his own glory? We don't know but we are grateful. Our weakness is not only not a bar but a positive attraction to him. This implies some sort of yielding on our part; the obstinate Pharisee he made no attempt to draw, he was vitriolic in his scorn. He will scourge the Pharisee but the woman taken in her sin—'Has no man condemned thee? Neither will I. . . ' Always his way. He would found his Church upon that Apostle who most offended him, he who denied his faith—Judas never did *that*. The one who bent to the storm was the one singled out to stand the storm.

He asks of us only a perfect resignation into his hands as a condition. We must ask *nothing*; let ourselves be moved this way and that. All that is asked of St Paul, 'My power is sufficient for thee'. And to St Peter, 'You, the hireling shepherd are to be the Shepherd of my flock'. John was faithful but John was not chosen. The slowest child at school makes the best teacher; the clever one does not understand the difficulties. What we have never been through is extremely difficult to help others to do. So God seems to deal with us. The things we are most unfitted for we are called to do. The most distasteful temptation drives us. God does search us out because we are weak and asks of us just to put ourselves into his hands, stand at his mercy. If this is done there is a chance for us; if not done, no chance. He doesn't want self-will. The man who empties his heart of all wisdom and trusts God, trusts infinite wisdom, and no man. We must put ourselves quietly and absolutely in God's hands, cling to nothing in life, leaving everything, shrinking from nothing asked of us, not foisting our own ideas but listening to his voice, not shouting our own; quiet, patient, yielding. The Mother of God *not yet a* Mother waited in the stillness of her room. So it is with everyone who would find God's will. If we are determined to walk in our own path we are bound to go astray; if we throw ourselves on his mercy we are safe.

But, some say, God is angry with us and so surely he will throw us away. That is *never* God's way. God does the opposite. He chastises those he loves, he lets the sinner go free. And so we know God is never really angry. God is love, unchanging love to the end. The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is God's love. God's love is eternal; there is nothing in God but love—wait and pray—watching must lead to prayer. 'So I shall have you wait till I come'. '*Come, Lord Jesus*', is the piteous prayer John makes. I shall make mistakes; yes, but find out what God wants of you. He sees what is

to be. Authority speaks: well, that is finished with, and brings peace. But if I *will* hold my own ideas then there will be trouble ahead, at least in my own heart. It is disturbing, unpeaceful our own way. Point to God like the compass steadily north, however much they may turn you round, loyal, steadfast. Our union with God is the only thing that really matters. Am I trying to do God's will, God's preference, God's choice? Do I cling to my own ideas? *Self* my idea; not selfishness but self. Am I making no effort to find out what is quite impartially the spirit of God?

Onlookers on a game see quite obviously what should be done; personal anxiety spoils the game for the player. Look down on my life: then there is a chance to forget self and see what is best. Prayer shows us this. We come back from prayer more on God's side; prayer clears any persistent clinging to ideas we once had. What is best? Prayer shows us this. But, I say, it will look . . . and people will say. . . What does it matter what people think or say?—we only want what *God* wants or we shouldn't be here. *His* ways are not ours. Watch and pray. You see the sparrow in the grass, head a little on one side; it taps and taps hoping it sounds like rain and that the worm will think it is and come to the surface; it is just watching. So we must watch. Watch, sitting a little loose, ready always. It is very difficult—a whole life's work; it's a career of sanctity. Our Lord was so impersonal—just the will of his Father. He lays his life down; no man takes it from him. It is our love of him, our devotion to him that gives us that unselfish un-insistence on our own ideas. Watching, praying, that I may listen for the voice to reach me. He is not in the whirlwind, his is a still small voice. I can only hear if I am incredibly silent. I must live with him, love and be like him. When you are fond of people you know the view they take upon a subject though you have never heard them say what their opinion is. We can guess what he wants if we have lived with him. It's worth putting aside everything, worth laying out everything we have to purchase the field with the hidden treasure. Ours it is. Are we great enough to be glad to be beaten? to know that our side has failed, but that God's will has been done? We are not asked to be *perfect* at it; we are asked to *try*.