

The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Practice of the Presence of God, by Brother Lawrence, edited by Lightheart

** This is a COPYRIGHTED Project Gutenberg eBook, Details Below ** ** Please follow the copyright guidelines in this file. **

Copyright (C) 2002 by Lightheart

This header should be the first thing seen when viewing this Project Gutenberg file. Please do not remove it. Do not change or edit the header without written permission.

Please read the "legal small print," and other information about the eBook and Project Gutenberg at the bottom of this file. Included is important information about your specific rights and restrictions in how the file may be used. You can also find out about how to make a donation to Project Gutenberg, and how to get involved.

Welcome To The World of Free Plain Vanilla Electronic Texts

eBooks Readable By Both Humans and By Computers, Since 1971

*****These eBooks Were Prepared By Thousands of Volunteers!*****

Title: The Practice of the Presence of God

Author: Brother Lawrence, edited by Lightheart

Release Date: May, 2004 [EBook #5657] [Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule] [Most recently updated October 5, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK,
THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD ***

Copyright (C) 2002 by Lighthouse.

Brother Lawrence's THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE
OF GOD 2002 Edition edited by Lighthouse at
PracticeGodsPresence.com

Includes: Editor's Preface Conversations and Letters

Editor's Preface

Brother Lawrence was born Nicholas Herman around 1610 in Herimenil, Lorraine, a Duchy of France. His birth records were destroyed in a fire at his parish church during the Thirty Years War, a war in which he fought as a young soldier. It was also the war in which he sustained a near fatal injury to his sciatic nerve. The injury left him quite crippled and in chronic pain for the rest of his life.

The details of his early life are few and sketchy. However, we know he was educated both at home and by his parish

priest whose first name was Lawrence and who was greatly admired by the young Nicolas. He was well read and, from an early age, drawn to a spiritual life of faith and love for God.

We also know that in the years between the abrupt end of his duties as a soldier and his entry into monastic life, he spent a period of time in the wilderness living like one of the early desert fathers. Also, prior to entering the monastery, and perhaps as preparation, he spent time as a civil servant. In his characteristic, self deprecating way, he mentions that he was a "footman who was clumsy and broke everything".

At mid-life he entered a newly established monastery in Paris where he became the cook for the community which grew to over one hundred members. After fifteen years, his duties were shifted to the sandal repair shop but, even then, he often returned to the busy kitchen to help out.

In times as troubled as today, Brother Lawrence, discovered, then followed, a pure and uncomplicated way to walk continually in God's presence. For some forty years, he lived and walked with Our Father at his side. Yet, through his own words, we learn that Brother Lawrence's first ten years were full of severe trials and challenges.

A gentle man of joyful spirit, Brother Lawrence shunned attention and the limelight, knowing that outside distraction "spoils all". It was not until after his death that a few of his letters were collected. Joseph de Beaufort, representative

and counsel to the local archbishop, first published the letters in a small pamphlet. The following year, in a second publication which he titled, 'The Practice of the Presence of God', de Beaufort included, as introductory material, the content of four conversations he had with Brother Lawrence.

In this small book, through letters and conversations, Brother Lawrence simply and beautifully explains how to continually walk with God - not from the head but from the heart. Brother Lawrence left the gift of a way of life available to anyone who seeks to know God's peace and presence; that anyone, regardless of age or circumstance, can practice -anywhere, anytime. Brother Lawrence also left the gift of a direct approach to living in God's presence that is as practical today as it was three hundred years ago.

Brother Lawrence died in 1691, having practiced God's presence for over forty years. His quiet death was much like his monastic life where each day and each hour was a new beginning and a fresh commitment to love God with all his heart.

Edited by Lightheart at PracticeGodsPresence.com
October 2002

CONVERSATIONS

Introduction: At the time of de Beaufort's interviews, Brother Lawrence was in his late fifties. Joseph de Beaufort later commented that the crippled brother, who

was then in charge of the upkeep of over one hundred pairs of sandals, was "rough in appearance but gentle in grace".

First Conversation: The first time I saw Brother Lawrence was upon the 3rd of August, 1666. He told me that God had done him a singular favor in his conversion at the age of eighteen. During that winter, upon seeing a tree stripped of its leaves and considering that within a little time the leaves would be renewed and after that the flowers and fruit appear, Brother Lawrence received a high view of the Providence and Power of God which has never since been effaced from his soul. This view had perfectly set him loose from the world and kindled in him such a love for God, that he could not tell whether it had increased in the forty years that he had lived since.

Brother Lawrence said he had been footman to M. Fieubert, the treasurer, and that he was a great awkward fellow who broke everything. He finally decided to enter a monastery thinking that he would there be made to smart for his awkwardness and the faults he would commit, and so he would sacrifice his life with its pleasures to God. But Brother Lawrence said that God had surprised him because he met with nothing but satisfaction in that state.

Brother Lawrence related that we should establish ourselves in a sense of God's Presence by continually conversing with Him. It was a shameful thing to quit His conversation to think of trifles and fooleries. We should feed and nourish our souls with high notions of God which would yield us great joy in being devoted to Him.

He said we ought to quicken and enliven our faith. It was lamentable we had so little. Instead of taking faith for the rule of their conduct, men amused themselves with trivial devotions which changed daily. He said that faith was sufficient to bring us to a high degree of perfection. We ought to give ourselves up to God with regard both to things temporal and spiritual and seek our satisfaction only in the fulfilling of His will. Whether God led us by suffering or by consolation all would be equal to a soul truly resigned.

He said we need fidelity in those disruptions in the ebb and flow of prayer when God tries our love to Him. This was the time for a complete act of resignation, whereof one act alone could greatly promote our spiritual advancement.

He said that as far as the miseries and sins he heard of daily in the world, he was so far from wondering at them, that, on the contrary, he was surprised there were not more considering the malice sinners were capable of. For his part, he prayed for them. But knowing that God could remedy the mischief they did when He pleased, he gave himself no further trouble.

Brother Lawrence said to arrive at such resignation as God requires, we should carefully watch over all the passions that mingle in spiritual as well as temporal things. God would give light concerning those passions to those who truly desire to serve Him.

At the end of this first conversation Brother Lawrence said that if my purpose for the visit was to sincerely discuss how to serve God, I might come to him as often as I pleased and without any fear of being troublesome. If this was not the case, then I ought visit him no more.

Second Conversation: Brother Lawrence told me he had always been governed by love without selfish views. Since he resolved to make the love of God the end of all his actions, he had found reasons to be well satisfied with his method. He was pleased when he could take up a straw from the ground for the love of God, seeking Him only, and nothing else, not even His gifts.

He said he had been long troubled in mind from a certain belief that he should be damned. All the men in the world could not have persuaded him to the contrary. This trouble of mind had lasted four years during which time he had suffered much.

Finally he reasoned: I did not engage in a religious life but for the love of God. I have endeavored to act only for Him. Whatever becomes of me, whether I be lost or saved, I will always continue to act purely for the love of God. I shall have this good at least that till death I shall have done all that is in me to love Him. From that time on Brother Lawrence lived his life in perfect liberty and continual joy. He placed his sins between himself and God to tell Him that he did not deserve His favors yet God still continued to bestow them in abundance.

Brother Lawrence said that in order to form a habit of conversing with God continually and referring all we do to Him, we must at first apply to Him with some diligence. Then, after a little care, we would find His love inwardly excite us to it without any difficulty.

He expected after the pleasant days God had given him, he would have his turn of pain and suffering. Yet he was not uneasy about it. Knowing that, since he could do nothing of himself, God would not fail to give him the strength to bear them.

When an occasion of practicing some virtue was offered, he addressed himself to God saying, "Lord, I cannot do this unless Thou enablest me". And then he received strength more than sufficient. When he had failed in his duty, he only confessed his fault saying to God, "I shall never do otherwise, if You leave me to myself. It is You who must hinder my falling and mend what is amiss." Then, after this, he gave himself no further uneasiness about it.

Brother Lawrence said we ought to act with God in the greatest simplicity, speaking to Him frankly and plainly, and imploring His assistance in our affairs just as they happen. God never failed to grant it, as Brother Lawrence had often experienced.

He said he had been lately sent into Burgundy to buy the provision of wine for the community. This was a very

unwelcome task for him because he had no turn for business and because he was lame and could not go about the boat but by rolling himself over the casks. Yet he gave himself no uneasiness about it, nor about the purchase of the wine. He said to God, it was His business he was about, and that he afterwards found it very well performed. He mentioned that it had turned out the same way the year before when he was sent to Auvergne.

So, likewise, in his business in the kitchen (to which he had naturally a great aversion), having accustomed himself to do everything there for the love of God and asking for His grace to do his work well, he had found everything easy during the fifteen years that he had been employed there. He was very pleased with the post he was now in. Yet he was as ready to quit that as the former, since he tried to please God by doing little things for the love of Him in any work he did. With him the set times of prayer were not different from other times. He retired to pray according to the directions of his superior, but he did not need such retirement nor ask for it because his greatest business did not divert him from God.

Since he knew his obligation to love God in all things, and as he endeavored to do so, he had no need of a director to advise him, but he greatly needed a confessor to absolve him. He said he was very sensible of his faults but not discouraged by them. He confessed them to God and made no excuses. Then, he peaceably resumed his usual practice of love and adoration.

In his trouble of mind, Brother Lawrence had consulted no one. Knowing only by the light of faith that God was present, he contented himself with directing all his actions to Him. He did everything with a desire to please Him and let what would come of it.

He said that useless thoughts spoil all - that the mischief began there. We ought to reject them as soon as we perceived their impertinence and return to our communion with God. In the beginning he had often passed his time appointed for prayer in rejecting wandering thoughts and falling right back into them. He could never regulate his devotion by certain methods as some do. Nevertheless, at first he had meditated for some time, but afterwards that went off in a manner that he could give no account of. Brother Lawrence emphasized that all bodily mortifications and other exercises are useless unless they serve to arrive at the union with God by love. He had well considered this. He found that the shortest way to go straight to God was by a continual exercise of love and doing all things for His sake.

He noted that there was a great difference between the acts of the intellect and those of the will. Acts of the intellect were comparatively of little value. Acts of the will were all important. Our only business was to love and delight ourselves in God. All possible kinds of mortification, if they were void of the love of God, could not efface a single sin. Instead, we ought, without anxiety, to expect the pardon of our sins from the blood of Jesus Christ only endeavoring to love Him with all our hearts.

And he noted that God seemed to have granted the greatest favors to the greatest sinners as more signal monuments of His mercy.

Brother Lawrence said the greatest pains or pleasures of this world were not to be compared with what he had experienced of both kinds in a spiritual state. As a result he feared nothing, desiring only one thing of God - that he might not offend Him. He said he carried no guilt. "When I fail in my duty, I readily acknowledge it, saying, I am used to do so. I shall never do otherwise if I am left to myself. If I fail not, then I give God thanks acknowledging that it comes from Him."

Third Conversation: Brother Lawrence told me that the foundation of the spiritual life in him had been a high notion and esteem of God in faith. When he had once well established his faith he had no other care but to reject every other thought so he might perform all his actions for the love of God. He said when sometimes he had not thought of God for a good while he did not disquiet himself for it. Having acknowledged his wretchedness to God, he simply returned to Him with so much the greater trust in Him.

He said the trust we put in God honors Him much and draws down great graces. Also, that it was impossible not only that God should deceive but that He should long let a soul suffer which is perfectly resigned to Him and resolved to endure everything for His sake.

Brother Lawrence often experienced the ready succors of Divine Grace. And because of his experience of grace, when he had business to do, he did not think of it beforehand. When it was time to do it, he found in God, as in a clear mirror, all that was fit for him to do. When outward business diverted him a little from the thought of God a fresh remembrance coming from God invested his soul and so inflamed and transported him that it was difficult for him to contain himself. He said he was more united to God in his outward employments than when he left them for devotion in retirement.

Brother Lawrence said that the worst that could happen to him was to lose that sense of God which he had enjoyed so long. Yet the goodness of God assured him He would not forsake him utterly and that He would give him strength to bear whatever evil He permitted to happen to him. Brother Lawrence, therefore, said he feared nothing. He had no occasion to consult with anybody about his state. In the past, when he had attempted to do it, he had always come away more perplexed. Since Brother Lawrence was ready to lay down his life for the love of God, he had no apprehension of danger.

He said that perfect resignation to God was a sure way to heaven, a way in which we have always sufficient light for our conduct. In the beginning of the spiritual life we ought to be faithful in doing our duty and denying ourselves and then, after a time, unspeakable pleasures followed. In difficulties we need only have recourse to Jesus Christ and beg His grace with which everything became easy.

Brother Lawrence said that many do not advance in the Christian progress because they stick in penances and particular exercises while they neglect the love of God which is the end. This appeared plainly by their works and was the reason why we see so little solid virtue. He said there needed neither art nor science for going to God, but only a heart resolutely determined to apply itself to nothing but Him and to love Him only.

Fourth Conversation: Brother Lawrence spoke with great openness of heart concerning his manner of going to God whereof some part is related already. He told me that all consists in one hearty renunciation of everything which we are sensible does not lead to God. We might accustom ourselves to a continual conversation with Him with freedom and in simplicity. We need only to recognize God intimately present with us and address ourselves to Him every moment. We need to beg His assistance for knowing His will in things doubtful and for rightly performing those which we plainly see He requires of us, offering them to Him before we do them, and giving Him thanks when we have completed them.

In our conversation with God we should also engage in praising, adoring, and loving Him incessantly for His infinite goodness and perfection. Without being discouraged on account of our sins, we should pray for His grace with a perfect confidence, as relying upon the infinite merits of our Lord. Brother Lawrence said that God never failed offering us His grace at each action. It never failed except when Brother Lawrence's thoughts had

wandered from a sense of God's Presence, or he forgot to ask His assistance. He said that God always gave us light in our doubts, when we had no other design but to please Him.

Our sanctification did not depend upon changing our works. Instead, it depended on doing that for God's sake which we commonly do for our own. He thought it was lamentable to see how many people mistook the means for the end, addicting themselves to certain works which they performed very imperfectly by reason of their human or selfish regards. The most excellent method he had found for going to God was that of doing our common business without any view of pleasing men but purely for the love of God.

Brother Lawrence felt it was a great delusion to think that the times of prayer ought to differ from other times. We are as strictly obliged to adhere to God by action in the time of action, as by prayer in its season. His own prayer was nothing else but a sense of the presence of God, his soul being at that time insensible to everything but Divine Love. When the appointed times of prayer were past, he found no difference, because he still continued with God, praising and blessing Him with all his might. Thus he passed his life in continual joy. Yet he hoped that God would give him somewhat to suffer when he grew stronger.

Brother Lawrence said we ought, once and for all, heartily put our whole trust in God, and make a total surrender of ourselves to Him, secure that He would not deceive us.

We ought not weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed. We should not wonder if, in the beginning, we often failed in our endeavors, but that at last we should gain a habit which will naturally produce its acts in us without our care and to our exceeding great delight.

The whole substance of religion was faith, hope, and charity. In the practice of these we become united to the will of God. Everything else is indifferent and to be used as a means that we may arrive at our end and then be swallowed up by faith and charity. All things are possible to him who believes. They are less difficult to him who hopes. They are more easy to him who loves, and still more easy to him who perseveres in the practice of these three virtues. The end we ought to propose to ourselves is to become, in this life, the most perfect worshippers of God we can possibly be, and as we hope to be through all eternity.

We must, from time to time, honestly consider and thoroughly examine ourselves. We will, then, realize that we are worthy of great contempt. Brother Lawrence noted that when we directly confront ourselves in this manner, we will understand why we are subject to all kinds of misery and problems. We will realize why we are subject to changes and fluctuations in our health, mental outlook, and dispositions. And we will, indeed, recognize that we deserve all the pain and labors God sends to humble us.

After this, we should not wonder that troubles, temptations, oppositions, and contradictions happen to us from men. We ought, on the contrary, to submit ourselves to them and bear them as long as God pleases as things highly advantageous to us. The greater perfection a soul aspires after, the more dependent it is upon Divine Grace.

Being questioned by one of his own community (to whom he was obliged to open himself) by what means he had attained such an habitual sense of God, Brother Lawrence told him that, since his first coming to the monastery, he had considered God as the end of all his thoughts and desires, as the mark to which they should tend, and in which they should terminate.

He noted that in the beginning of his novitiate he spent the hours appointed for private prayer in thinking of God so as to convince his mind and impress deeply upon his heart the Divine existence. He did this by devout sentiments and submission to the lights of faith, rather than by studied reasonings and elaborate meditations. By this short and sure method he exercised himself in the knowledge and love of God, resolving to use his utmost endeavor to live in a continual sense of His Presence, and, if possible, never to forget Him more.

When he had thus, in prayer, filled his mind with great sentiments of that Infinite Being, he went to his work appointed in the kitchen (for he was then cook for the community). There having first considered severally the things his office required, and when and how each thing

was to be done, he spent all the intervals of his time, both before and after his work, in prayer.

When he began his business, he said to God with a filial trust in Him, "O my God, since Thou art with me, and I must now, in obedience to Thy commands, apply my mind to these outward things, I beseech Thee to grant me the grace to continue in Thy Presence; and to this end do Thou prosper me with Thy assistance. Receive all my works, and possess all my affections." As he proceeded in his work, he continued his familiar conversation with his Maker, imploring His grace, and offering to Him all his actions.

When he had finished, he examined himself how he had discharged his duty. If he found well, he returned thanks to God. If otherwise, he asked pardon and, without being discouraged, he set his mind right again. He then continued his exercise of the presence of God as if he had never deviated from it. "Thus," said he, "by rising after my falls, and by frequently renewed acts of faith and love, I am come to a state wherein it would be as difficult for me not to think of God as it was at first to accustom myself to it."

As Brother Lawrence had found such an advantage in walking in the presence of God, it was natural for him to recommend it earnestly to others. More strikingly, his example was a stronger inducement than any arguments he could propose. His very countenance was edifying with such a sweet and calm devotion appearing that he could not but affect the beholders.

It was observed, that in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen, he still preserved his recollection and heavenly-mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season with an even uninterrupted composure and tranquillity of spirit. "The time of business," said he, "does not with me differ from the time of prayer. In the noise and clutter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the Blessed Supper."

Letters

Introduction: Brother Lawrence's letters are the very heart and soul of what is titled 'The Practice of the Presence of God'. All of these letters were written during the last ten years of his life. Many of them were to long-time friends, a Carmelite sister and a sister at a nearby convent. One or both of these friends were from his native village, perhaps relatives.

The first letter was probably written to the prioress of one of these convents. The second letter was written to Brother Lawrence's own spiritual adviser. Note that the fourth letter is written in the third person where Brother Lawrence describes his own experience. The letters follow the tradition of substituting M— for specific names.

First Letter: You so earnestly desire that I describe the method by which I arrived at that habitual sense of God's presence, which our merciful Lord has been pleased to grant me. I am complying with your request with my

request that you show my letter to no one. If I knew that you would let it be seen, all the desire I have for your spiritual progress would not be enough to make me comply.

The account I can give you is: Having found in many books different methods of going to God and divers practices of the spiritual life, I thought this would serve rather to puzzle me than facilitate what I sought after, which was nothing but how to become wholly God's. This made me resolve to give the all for the All. After having given myself wholly to God, to make all the satisfaction I could for my sins, I renounced, for the love of Him, everything that was not He, and I began to live as if there was none but He and I in the world.

Sometimes I considered myself before Him as a poor criminal at the feet of his judge. At other times I beheld Him in my heart as my Father, as my God. I worshipped Him the oftenest I could, keeping my mind in His holy presence and recalling it as often as I found it wandered from Him. I made this my business, not only at the appointed times of prayer but all the time; every hour, every minute, even in the height of my work, I drove from my mind everything that interrupted my thoughts of God.

I found no small pain in this exercise. Yet I continued it, notwithstanding all the difficulties that occurred. And I tried not to trouble or disquiet myself when my mind wandered. Such has been my common practice ever since I entered religious life. Though I have done it very imperfectly, I have found great advantages by it. These, I well know, are

to be imputed to the mercy and goodness of God because we can do nothing without Him; and I still less than any.

When we are faithful to keep ourselves in His holy presence, and set Him always before us, this hinders our offending Him, and doing anything that may displease Him. It also begets in us a holy freedom, and, if I may so speak, a familiarity with God, where, when we ask, He supplies the graces we need. Over time, by often repeating these acts, they become habitual, and the presence of God becomes quite natural to us.

Please give Him thanks with me, for His great goodness towards me, which I can never sufficiently express, and for the many favors He has done to so miserable a sinner as I am. May all things praise Him. Amen.

Second Letter: Not finding my manner of life described in books, although I have no problem with that, yet, for reassurance, I would appreciate your thoughts about it.

In conversation some days ago a devout person told me the spiritual life was a life of grace, which begins with servile fear, which is increased by hope of eternal life, and which is consummated by pure love; that each of these states had its different steps, by which one arrives at last at that blessed consummation.

I have not followed these methods at all. On the contrary, I instinctively felt they would discourage me. Instead, at my entrance into religious life, I took a resolution to give

myself up to God as the best satisfaction I could make for my sins and, for the love of Him, to renounce all besides.

For the first years, I commonly employed myself during the time set apart for devotion with thoughts of death, judgment, hell, heaven, and my sins. Thus I continued some years applying my mind carefully the rest of the day, and even in the midst of my work, to the presence of God, whom I considered always as with me, often as in my heart.

At length I began to do the same thing during my set time of prayer, which gave me joy and consolation. This practice produced in me so high an esteem for God that faith alone was enough to assure me.

Such was my beginning. Yet I must tell you that for the first ten years I suffered a great deal. During this time I fell often, and rose again presently. It seemed to me that all creatures, reason, and God Himself were against me and faith alone for me.

The apprehension that I was not devoted to God as I wished to be, my past sins always present to my mind, and the great unmerited favors which God did me, were the source of my sufferings and feelings of unworthiness. I was sometimes troubled with thoughts that to believe I had received such favors was an effect of my imagination, which pretended to be so soon where others arrived with great difficulty. At other times I believed that it was a willful delusion and that there really was no hope for me.

Finally, I considered the prospect of spending the rest of my days in these troubles. I discovered this did not diminish the trust I had in God at all. In fact, it only served to increase my faith. It then seemed that, all at once, I found myself changed. My soul, which, until that time was in trouble, felt a profound inward peace, as if she were in her center and place of rest.

Ever since that time I walk before God simply, in faith, with humility, and with love. I apply myself diligently to do nothing and think nothing which may displease Him. I hope that when I have done what I can, He will do with me what He pleases.

As for what passes in me at present, I cannot express it. I have no pain or difficulty about my state because I have no will but that of God. I endeavor to accomplish His will in all things. And I am so resigned that I would not take up a straw from the ground against His order or from any motive but that of pure love for Him.

I have ceased all forms of devotion and set prayers except those to which my state requires. I make it my priority to persevere in His holy presence, wherein I maintain a simple attention and a fond regard for God, which I may call an actual presence of God. Or, to put it another way, it is an habitual, silent, and private conversation of the soul with God. This gives me much joy and contentment. In short, I am sure, beyond all doubt, that my soul has been with God above these past thirty years. I pass over many things that I may not be tedious to you.

Yet, I think it is appropriate to tell you how I perceive myself before God, whom I behold as my King. I consider myself as the most wretched of men. I am full of faults, flaws, and weaknesses, and have committed all sorts of crimes against his King. Touched with a sensible regret I confess all my wickedness to Him. I ask His forgiveness. I abandon myself in His hands that He may do what He pleases with me.

My King is full of mercy and goodness. Far from chastising me, He embraces me with love. He makes me eat at His table. He serves me with His own hands and gives me the key to His treasures. He converses and delights Himself with me incessantly, in a thousand and a thousand ways. And He treats me in all respects as His favorite. In this way I consider myself continually in His holy presence.

My most usual method is this simple attention, an affectionate regard for God to whom I find myself often attached with greater sweetness and delight than that of an infant at the mother's breast. To choose an expression, I would call this state the bosom of God, for the inexpressible sweetness which I taste and experience there. If, at any time, my thoughts wander from it from necessity or infirmity, I am presently recalled by inward emotions so charming and delicious that I cannot find words to describe them. Please reflect on my great wretchedness, of which you are fully informed, rather than on the great favors God does one as unworthy and ungrateful as I am.

As for my set hours of prayer, they are simply a continuation of the same exercise. Sometimes I consider myself as a stone before a carver, whereof He is to make a statue. Presenting myself thus before God, I desire Him to make His perfect image in my soul and render me entirely like Himself. At other times, when I apply myself to prayer, I feel all my spirit lifted up without any care or effort on my part. This often continues as if it was suspended yet firmly fixed in God like a center or place of rest.

I know that some charge this state with inactivity, delusion, and self-love. I confess that it is a holy inactivity. And it would be a happy self-love if the soul, in that state, were capable of it. But while the soul is in this repose, she cannot be disturbed by the kinds of things to which she was formerly accustomed. The things that the soul used to depend on would now hinder rather than assist her.

Yet, I cannot see how this could be called imagination or delusion because the soul which enjoys God in this way wants nothing but Him. If this is delusion, then only God can remedy it. Let Him do what He pleases with me. I desire only Him and to be wholly devoted to Him.

Please send me your opinion as I greatly value and have a singular esteem for your reverence, and am yours.

Third Letter: We have a God who is infinitely gracious and knows all our wants. I always thought that He would reduce you to extremity. He will come in His own time, and when you least expect it. Hope in Him more than ever. Thank Him with me for the favors He does you, particularly

for the fortitude and patience which He gives you in your afflictions. It is a plain mark of the care He takes of you. Comfort yourself with Him, and give thanks for all.

I admire also the fortitude and bravery of M—. God has given him a good disposition and a good will; but he is still a little worldly and somewhat immature. I hope the affliction God has sent him will help him do some reflection and inner searching and that it may prove to be a wholesome remedy to him. It is a chance for him to put all his trust in God who accompanies him everywhere. Let him think of Him as much as he can, especially in time of great danger.

A little lifting up of the heart and a remembrance of God suffices. One act of inward worship, though upon a march with sword in hand, are prayers which, however short, are nevertheless very acceptable to God. And, far from lessening a soldier's courage in occasions of danger, they actually serve to fortify it. Let him think of God as often as possible. Let him accustom himself, by degrees, to this small but holy exercise. No one sees it, and nothing is easier than to repeat these little internal adorations all through the day.

Please recommend to him that he think of God the most he can in this way. It is very fit and most necessary for a soldier, who is daily faced with danger to his life, and often to his very salvation.

I hope that God will assist him and all the family, to whom I present my service, being theirs and yours.

Fourth Letter: I am taking this opportunity to tell you about the sentiments of one of our society concerning the admirable effects and continual assistance he receives from the presence of God. May we both profit by them.

For the past forty years his continual care has been to be always with God; and to do nothing, say nothing, and think nothing which may displease Him. He does this without any view or motive except pure love of Him and because God deserves infinitely more.

He is now so accustomed to that Divine presence that he receives from it continual comfort and peace. For about thirty years his soul has been filled with joy and delight so continual, and sometimes so great, that he is forced to find ways to hide their appearing outwardly to others who may not understand.

If sometimes he becomes a little distracted from that Divine presence, God gently recalls Himself by a stirring in his soul. This often happens when he is most engaged in his outward chores and tasks. He answers with exact fidelity to these inward drawings, either by an elevation of his heart towards God, or by a meek and fond regard to Him, or by such words as love forms upon these occasions. For instance, he may say, "My God, here I am all devoted to You," or "Lord, make me according to Your heart."

It seems to him (in fact, he feels it) that this God of love, satisfied with such few words, reposes again and rests in the depth and center of his soul. The experience of these

things gives him such certainty that God is always in the innermost part of his soul that he is beyond doubting it under any circumstances.

Judge by this what content and satisfaction he enjoys. While he continually finds within himself so great a treasure, he no longer has any need to search for it. He no longer has any anxiety about finding it because he now has his beautiful treasure open before him and may take what he pleases of it.

He often points out our blindness and exclaims that those who content themselves with so little are to be pitied. God, says he, has infinite treasure to bestow, and we take so little through routine devotion which lasts but a moment. Blind as we are, we hinder God, and stop the current of His graces. But when He finds a soul penetrated with a lively faith, He pours into it His graces and favors plentifully. There they flow like a torrent, which, after being forcibly stopped against its ordinary course, when it has found a passage, spreads itself with impetuosity and abundance.

Yet we often stop this torrent by the little value we set upon it. Let us stop it no more. Let us enter into ourselves and break down the bank which hinders it. Let us make way for grace. Let us redeem the lost time, for perhaps we have but little left. Death follows us close so let us be well prepared for it. We die but once and a mistake there is irretrievable.

I say again, let us enter into ourselves. The time presses. There is no room for delay. Our souls are at stake. It seems to me that you are prepared and have taken effectual measures so you will not be taken by surprise. I commend you for it. It is the one thing necessary. We must always work at it, because not to persevere in the spiritual life is to go back. But those who have the gale of the Holy Spirit go forward even in sleep. If the vessel of our soul is still tossed with winds and storms, let us awake the Lord who reposes in it. He will quickly calm the sea.

I have taken the liberty to impart to you these good sentiments that you may compare them with your own. May they serve to re-ignite them, if at any time they may be even a little cooled. Let us recall our first favors and remember our early joys and comforts. And, let us benefit from the example and sentiments of this brother who is little known by the world, but known and extremely caressed by God.

I will pray for you. Please pray also for me, as I am yours in our Lord.

Fifth Letter: Today I received two books and a letter from Sister M—, who is preparing to make her profession. She desires the prayers of your holy society, and yours in particular. I think she greatly values your support. Please do not disappoint her. Pray to God that she may take her vows in view of His love alone, and with a firm resolution to be wholly devoted to Him. I will send you one of those books about the presence of God; a subject which, in my

opinion, contains the whole spiritual life. It seems to me that whoever duly practices it will soon become devout.

I know that for the right practice of it, the heart must be empty of all other things; because God will possess the heart alone. As He cannot possess it alone, without emptying it of all besides, so neither can He act there and do in it what He pleases unless it be left vacant to Him. There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God. Only those can comprehend it who practice and experience it. Yet I do not advise you to do it from that motive. It is not pleasure which we ought to seek in this exercise. Let us do it from a principle of love, and because it is God's will for us.

Were I a preacher, I would above all other things preach the practice of the presence of God. Were I a director, I would advise all the world to do it, so necessary do I think it, and so easy too. Ah! knew we but the want we have of the grace and assistance of God, we would never lose sight of Him, no, not for a moment.

Believe me. Immediately make a holy and firm resolution never more to forget Him. Resolve to spend the rest of your days in His sacred presence, deprived of all consolations for the love of Him if He thinks fit. Set heartily about this work, and if you do it sincerely, be assured that you will soon find the effects of it.

I will assist you with my prayers, poor as they are. I recommend myself earnestly to you and those of your holy society.

Sixth Letter: I have received from M— the things which you gave her for me. I wonder that you have not given me your thoughts on the little book I sent to you and which you must have received. Set heartily about the practice of it in your old age. It is better late than never.

I cannot imagine how religious persons can live satisfied without the practice of the presence of God. For my part I keep myself retired with Him in the depth and center of my soul as much as I can. While I am with Him I fear nothing; but the least turning from Him is insupportable. This practice does not tire the body. It is, however, proper to deprive it sometimes, nay often, of many little pleasures which are innocent and lawful. God will not permit a soul that desires to be devoted entirely to Him to take pleasures other than with Him. That is more than reasonable.

I do not say we must put any violent constraint upon ourselves. No, we must serve God in a holy freedom. We must work faithfully without trouble or disquiet, recalling our mind to God mildly and with tranquillity as often as we find it wandering from Him. It is, however, necessary to put our whole trust in God. We must lay aside all other cares and even some forms of devotion, though very good in themselves, yet such as one often engages in routinely. Those devotions are only means to attain to the end. Once we have established a habit of the practice of the

presence of God, we are then with Him who is our end. We have no need to return to the means. We may simply continue with Him in our commerce of love, persevering in His holy presence with an act of praise, of adoration, or of desire or with an act of resignation, or thanksgiving, and in all the ways our spirits can invent.

Be not discouraged by the repugnance which you may find in it from nature. You must sacrifice yourself. At first, one often thinks it a waste of time. But you must go on and resolve to persevere in it until death, notwithstanding all the difficulties that may occur.

I recommend myself to the prayers of your holy society, and yours in particular. I am yours in our Lord.

Seventh Letter: I pity you much. It will be a great relief if you can leave the care of your affairs to M— and spend the remainder of your life only in worshipping God. He requires no great matters of us; a little remembrance of Him from time to time, a little adoration. Sometimes to pray for His grace. Sometimes to offer Him your sufferings. And sometimes to return Him thanks for the favors He has given you, and still gives you, in the midst of your troubles. Console yourself with Him the oftenest you can. Lift up your heart to Him at your meals and when you are in company. The least little remembrance will always be pleasing to Him.

You need not cry very loud. He is nearer to us than we are aware. And we do not always have to be in church to be with God. We may make an oratory of our heart so we

can, from time to time, retire to converse with Him in meekness, humility, and love. Every one is capable of such familiar conversation with God, some more, some less. He knows what we can do.

Let us begin then. Perhaps He expects but one generous resolution on our part. Have courage. We have but little time to live. You are nearly sixty-four, and I am almost eighty. Let us live and die with God. Sufferings will be sweet and pleasant while we are with Him. Without Him, the greatest pleasures will be a cruel punishment to us. May He be blessed by all.

Gradually become accustomed to worship Him in this way; to beg His grace, to offer Him your heart from time to time; in the midst of your business, even every moment if you can. Do not always scrupulously confine yourself to certain rules or particular forms of devotion. Instead, act in faith with love and humility.

You may assure M— of my poor prayers, and that I am their servant, and yours particularly.

Eighth Letter: You tell me nothing new. You are not the only one who is troubled with wandering thoughts. Our mind is extremely roving. But the will is mistress of all our faculties. She must recall our stray thoughts and carry them to God as their final end.

If the mind is not sufficiently controlled and disciplined at our first engaging in devotion, it contracts certain bad habits of wandering and dissipation. These are difficult to

overcome. The mind can draw us, even against our will, to worldly things. I believe one remedy for this is to humbly confess our faults and beg God's mercy and help.

I do not advise you to use multiplicity of words in prayer. Many words and long discourses are often the occasions of wandering. Hold yourself in prayer before God, like a dumb or paralytic beggar at a rich man's gate. Let it be your business to keep your mind in the presence of the Lord. If your mind sometimes wanders and withdraws itself from Him, do not become upset. Trouble and disquiet serve rather to distract the mind than to re-collect it. The will must bring it back in tranquillity. If you persevere in this manner, God will have pity on you.

One way to re-collect the mind easily in the time of prayer, and preserve it more in tranquillity, is not to let it wander too far at other times. Keep your mind strictly in the presence of God. Then being accustomed to think of Him often, you will find it easy to keep your mind calm in the time of prayer, or at least to recall it from its wanderings. I have told you already of the advantages we may draw from this practice of the presence of God. Let us set about it seriously and pray for one another.

Ninth Letter: The enclosed is an answer to that which I received from M—. Please deliver it to her. She is full of good will but she would go faster than grace! One does not become holy all at once. I recommend her to your guidance. We ought to help one another by our advice, and yet more by our good example. Please let me hear of

her from time to time and whether she is very fervent and obedient.

Let us often consider that our only business in this life is to please God, that perhaps all besides is but folly and vanity. You and I have lived over forty years in the monastic life. Have we employed them in loving and serving God, who by His mercy has called us to this state and for that very end? I am sometimes filled with shame and confusion when I reflect, on the one hand, upon the great favors which God has done and continues to do for me; and, on the other, upon the ill use I have made of them and my small advancement in the way of perfection.

Since, by His mercy, He gives us yet a little time, let us begin in earnest. Let us repair the lost time. Let us return with full assurance to that Father of mercies, who is always ready to receive us affectionately. Let us generously renounce, for the love of Him, all that is not Himself. He deserves infinitely more. Let us think of Him perpetually. Let us put all our trust in Him.

I have no doubt that we shall soon receive an abundance of His grace, with which we can do all things, and, without which we can do nothing but sin. We cannot escape the dangers which abound in life without the actual and continual help of God. Let us pray to Him for it constantly.

How can we pray to Him without being with Him? How can we be with Him but in thinking of Him often? And how can we often think of Him, but by a holy habit which we should form of it? You will tell me that I always say the same

thing. It is true, for this is the best and easiest method I know. I use no other. I advise all the world to do it.

We must know before we can love. In order to know God, we must often think of Him. And when we come to love Him, we shall then also think of Him often, for our heart will be with our treasure.

Tenth Letter: I have had a good deal of difficulty bringing myself to write to M.—. I do it now purely because you desire me to do so. Please address it and send it to him. It is pleasing to see all the faith you have in God. May He increase it in you more and more. We cannot have too much trust in so good and faithful a Friend who will never fail us in this world nor in the next.

If M.— takes advantage of the loss he has had and puts all his confidence in God, He will soon give him another friend more powerful and more inclined to serve him. He disposes of hearts as He pleases. Perhaps M.— was too attached to him he has lost. We ought to love our friends, but without encroaching upon the love of God, which must always be first.

Please keep my recommendation in mind that you think of God often; by day, by night, in your business, and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you. Leave Him not alone. You would think it rude to leave a friend alone who came to visit you. Why, then, must God be neglected? Do not forget Him but think on Him often. Adore Him continually. Live and die with Him. This is the

glorious work of a Christian; in a word, this is our profession. If we do not know it, we must learn it.

I will endeavor to help you with my prayers, and am yours in our Lord.

Eleventh Letter: I do not pray that you may be delivered from your pains; but I pray earnestly that God gives you strength and patience to bear them as long as He pleases. Comfort yourself with Him who holds you fastened to the cross. He will loose you when He thinks fit. Happy are those who suffer with Him. Accustom yourself to suffer in that manner, and seek from Him the strength to endure as much, and as long, as He judges necessary for you.

Worldly people do not comprehend these truths. It is not surprising though, since they suffer like what they are and not like Christians. They see sickness as a pain against nature and not as a favor from God. Seeing it only in that light, they find nothing in it but grief and distress. But those who consider sickness as coming from the hand of God, out of His mercy and as the means He uses for their salvation, commonly find sweetness and consolation in it.

I pray that you see that God is often nearer to us and present within us in sickness than in health. Do not rely completely on another physician because He reserves your cure to Himself. Put all your trust in God. You will soon find the effects in your recovery, which we often delay by putting greater faith in medicine than in God. Whatever remedies you use, they will succeed only so far as He permits. When pains come from God, only He can

ultimately cure them. He often sends sickness to the body to cure diseases of the soul. Comfort yourself with the Sovereign Physician of both soul and body.

I expect you will say that I am very much at ease, and that I eat and drink at the table of the Lord. You have reason. But think how painful it would be to the greatest criminal in the world to eat at the king's table and be served by him, yet have no assurance of pardon? I believe he would feel an anxiety that nothing could calm except his trust in the goodness of his sovereign. So I assure you, that whatever pleasures I taste at the table of my King, my sins, ever present before my eyes, as well as the uncertainty of my pardon, torment me. Though I accept that torment as something pleasing to God.

Be satisfied with the condition in which God places you. However happy you may think me, I envy you. Pain and suffering would be a paradise to me, if I could suffer with my God. The greatest pleasures would be hell if I relished them without Him. My only consolation would be to suffer something for His sake.

I must, in a little time, go to God. What comforts me in this life is that I now see Him by faith. I see Him in such a manner that I sometimes say, I believe no more, but I see. I feel what faith teaches us, and, in that assurance and that practice of faith, I live and die with Him.

Stay with God always for He is the only support and comfort for your affliction. I shall beseech Him to be with you. I present my service.

Twelfth Letter: If we were well accustomed to the practice of the presence of God, bodily discomforts would be greatly alleviated. God often permits us to suffer a little to purify our souls and oblige us to stay close to Him.

Take courage. Offer Him your pain and pray to Him for strength to endure them. Above all, get in the habit of often thinking of God, and forget Him the least you can. Adore Him in your infirmities. Offer yourself to Him from time to time. And, in the height of your sufferings, humbly and affectionately beseech Him (as a child his father) to make you conformable to His holy will. I shall endeavor to assist you with my poor prayers.

God has many ways of drawing us to Himself. He sometimes seems to hide Himself from us. But faith alone ought to be our support. Faith is the foundation of our confidence. We must put all our faith in God. He will not fail us in time of need. I do not know how God will dispose of me but I am always happy. All the world suffers and I, who deserve the severest discipline, feel joys so continual and great that I can scarcely contain them.

I would willingly ask God for a part of your sufferings. I know my weakness is so great that if He left me one moment to myself, I would be the most wretched man alive. And yet, I do not know how He could leave me alone because faith gives me as strong a conviction as reason. He never forsakes us until we have first forsaken Him. Let us fear to leave Him. Let us always be with Him. Let us live and die in His presence. Do pray for me, as I pray for you.

Thirteenth Letter: I am sorry to see you suffer so long. What gives me some ease and sweetens the feeling I have about your griefs, is that they are proof of God's love for you. See your pains in that view and you will bear them more easily. In your case, it is my opinion that, at this point, you should discontinue human remedies and resign yourself entirely to the providence of God. Perhaps He waits only for that resignation and perfect faith in Him to cure you. Since, in spite of all the care you have taken, treatment has proved unsuccessful and your malady still increases, wait no longer. Put yourself entirely in His hands and expect all from Him.

I told you in my last letter that He sometimes permits bodily discomforts to cure the distempers of the soul. Have courage. Make a virtue of necessity. Do not ask God for deliverance from your pain. Instead, out of love for Him, ask for the strength to resolutely bear all that He pleases, and as long as He pleases. Such prayers are hard at first, but they are very pleasing to God, and become sweet to those that love Him.

Love sweetens pains. And when one loves God, one suffers for His sake with joy and courage. Do so, I beseech you. Comfort yourself with Him. He is the only physician for all our illnesses. He is the Father of the afflicted and always ready to help us. He loves us infinitely more than we can imagine. Love Him in return and seek no consolation elsewhere. I hope you will soon receive His comfort. Adieu.

I will help you with my prayers, poor as they are, and shall always be yours in our Lord.

Fourteenth Letter: I give thanks to our Lord for having relieved you a little as you desired. I have often been near death and I was never so much satisfied as then. At those times I did not pray for any relief, but I prayed for strength to suffer with courage, humility, and love. How sweet it is to suffer with God! However great your sufferings may be, receive them with love. It is paradise to suffer and be with Him. If, in this life, we might enjoy the peace of paradise, we must accustom ourselves to a familiar, humble, and affectionate conversation with God.

We must hinder our spirits wandering from Him on all occasions. We must make our heart a spiritual temple so we can constantly adore Him. We must continually watch over ourselves so we do not do anything that may displease Him. When our minds and hearts are filled with God, suffering becomes full of unction and consolation.

I well know that to arrive at this state, the beginning is very difficult because we must act purely on faith. But, though it is difficult, we know also that we can do all things with the grace of God. He never refuses those who ask earnestly. Knock. Persevere in knocking. And I answer for it, that, in His due time, He will open His graces to you. He will grant, all at once, what He has deferred during many years. Adieu.

Pray to Him for me, as I pray to Him for you. I hope to see Him soon.

Fifteenth Letter: God knows best what we need. All that He does is for our good. If we knew how much He loves us, we would always be ready to receive both the bitter and the sweet from His Hand. It would make no difference. All that came from Him would be pleasing. The worst afflictions only appear intolerable if we see them in the wrong light. When we see them as coming from the hand of God and know that it is our loving Father who humbles and distresses us, our sufferings lose their bitterness and can even become a source of consolation.

Let all our efforts be to know God. The more one knows Him, the greater one desires to know Him. Knowledge is commonly the measure of love. The deeper and more extensive our knowledge, the greater is our love. If our love of God were great we would love Him equally in pain and pleasure.

We only deceive ourselves by seeking or loving God for any favors which He has or may grant us. Such favors, no matter how great, can never bring us as near to God as can one simple act of faith. Let us seek Him often by faith. He is within us. Seek Him not elsewhere.

Are we not rude and deserve blame if we leave Him alone to busy ourselves with trifles which do not please Him and perhaps even offend Him? These trifles may one day cost us dearly. Let us begin earnestly to be devoted to Him. Let us cast everything else out of our hearts. He wants to possess the heart alone. Beg this favor of Him. If we do all we can, we will soon see that change wrought in us which we so greatly desire.

I cannot thank Him enough for the relief He has given you. I hope to see Him within a few days. Let us pray for one another.

Brother Lawrence died peacefully within days of this last letter.

————- Visit: PracticeGodsPresence.com Home of
Brother Lawrence's
Practice of the Presence of God

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK, THE
PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD ***

*****This file should be named brola10.txt or brola10.zip

Corrected EDITIONS of our eBooks get a new NUMBER,
brola11.zip

We are now trying to release all our eBooks one year in advance of the official release dates, leaving time for better editing. Please be encouraged to tell us about any error or corrections, even years after the official publication date.

Please note neither this listing nor its contents are final til midnight of the last day of the month of any such announcement. The official release date of all Project Gutenberg eBooks is at Midnight, Central Time, of the last

day of the stated month. A preliminary version may often be posted for suggestion, comment and editing by those who wish to do so.

Most people start at our sites at: <http://gutenberg.net> or <http://promo.net/pg>

These Web sites include award-winning information about Project Gutenberg, including how to donate, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter (free!).

Those of you who want to download any eBook before announcement can get to them as follows, and just download by date. This is also a good way to get them instantly upon announcement, as the indexes our cataloguers produce obviously take a while after an announcement goes out in the Project Gutenberg Newsletter.

<http://www.ibiblio.org/gutenberg/etext03> or
<ftp://ftp.ibiblio.org/pub/docs/books/gutenberg/etext03>

Or /etext02, 01, 00, 99, 98, 97, 96, 95, 94, 93, 92, 92, 91
or 90

Just search by the first five letters of the filename you want, as it appears in our Newsletters.

Information about Project Gutenberg (one page)

We produce about two million dollars for each hour we work. The time it takes us, a rather conservative estimate, is fifty hours to get any eBook selected, entered, proofread, edited, copyright searched and analyzed, the copyright letters written, etc. Our projected audience is one hundred million readers. If the value per text is nominally estimated at one dollar then we produce \$2 million dollars per hour in 2001 as we release over 50 new eBook files per month, or 500 more eBooks in 2000 for a total of 4000+ If they reach just 1-2% of the world's population then the total should reach over 300 billion eBooks given away by year's end.

The Goal of Project Gutenberg is to Give Away One Trillion eBook Files by December 31, 2001. [10,000 x 100,000,000 = 1 Trillion] This is ten thousand titles each to one hundred million readers, which is only about 4% of the present number of computer users.

At our revised rates of production, we will reach only one-third of that goal by the end of 2001, or about 4,000 eBooks. We need funding, as well as continued efforts by volunteers, to maintain or increase our production and reach our goals.

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation has been created to secure a future for Project Gutenberg into the next millennium.

As of February, 2002, contributions are being solicited from people and organizations in: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas,

Connecticut,
Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii,
Illinois,
Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine,
Massachusetts,
Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska,
Nevada, New
Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North
Carolina, Ohio,
Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South
Carolina, South
Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia,
Washington, West
Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

We have filed in all 50 states now, but these are the only ones that have responded.

As the requirements for other states are met, additions to this list will be made and fund raising will begin in the additional states. Please feel free to ask to check the status of your state.

In answer to various questions we have received on this:

We are constantly working on finishing the paperwork to legally request donations in all 50 states. If your state is not listed and you would like to know if we have added it since the list you have, just ask.

While we cannot solicit donations from people in states where we are not yet registered, we know of no prohibition

against accepting donations from donors in these states who approach us with an offer to donate.

International donations are accepted, but we don't know ANYTHING about how to make them tax-deductible, or even if they CAN be made deductible, and don't have the staff to handle it even if there are ways.

Donations by check or money order may be sent to:

Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation
PMB 113
1739 University Ave.
Oxford, MS 38655-4109

Contact us if you want to arrange for a wire transfer or payment method other than by check or money order.

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation has been approved by the US Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) organization with EIN [Employee Identification Number] 64-622154. Donations are tax-deductible to the maximum extent permitted by law. As fund-raising requirements for other states are met, additions to this list will be made and fund-raising will begin in the additional states.

We need your donations more than ever!

You can get up to date donation information online at:

<http://www.gutenberg.net/donation.html>

If you can't reach Project Gutenberg, you can always email directly to:

Michael S. Hart <hart@pobox.com>

Prof. Hart will answer or forward your message.

We would prefer to send you information by email.

****Information prepared by the Project Gutenberg legal advisor** (Three Pages)**

*****START** SMALL PRINT! for COPYRIGHT PROTECTED EBOOKS *****

TITLE AND COPYRIGHT NOTICE:

The Practice of the Presence of God, by Brother Lawrence
Copyright (C) 2002 by Lighthouse

This eBook is distributed by Professor Michael S. Hart through the Project Gutenberg Association (the "Project") under the "Project Gutenberg" trademark and with the permission of the eBook's copyright owner.

Please do not use the "PROJECT GUTENBERG" trademark to market any commercial products without permission.

LICENSE You can (and are encouraged!) to copy and distribute this Project Gutenberg-tm eBook. Since, unlike many other of the Project's eBooks, it is copyright protected, and since the materials and methods you use

will effect the Project's reputation, your right to copy and distribute it is limited by the copyright laws and by the conditions of this "Small Print!" statement.

[A] ALL COPIES: You may distribute copies of this eBook electronically or on any machine readable medium now known or hereafter discovered so long as you:

(1) Honor the refund and replacement provisions of this "Small Print!" statement; and

(2) Pay a royalty to the Foundation of 20% of the gross profits you derive calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. If you don't derive profits, no royalty is due. Royalties are payable to "Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation" within the 60 days following each date you prepare (or were legally required to prepare) your annual (or equivalent periodic) tax return.

[B] EXACT AND MODIFIED COPIES: The copies you distribute must either be exact copies of this eBook, including this Small Print statement, or can be in binary, compressed, mark- up, or proprietary form (including any form resulting from word processing or hypertext software), so long as *EITHER*:

(1) The eBook, when displayed, is clearly readable, and does *not* contain characters other than those intended by the author of the work, although tilde (~), asterisk (*) and underline (__) characters may be used to convey punctuation intended by the author, and additional characters may be used to indicate hypertext links; OR

(2) The eBook is readily convertible by the reader at no expense into plain ASCII, EBCDIC or equivalent form by the program that displays the eBook (as is the case, for instance, with most word processors); OR

(3) You provide or agree to provide on request at no additional cost, fee or expense, a copy of the eBook in plain ASCII.

LIMITED WARRANTY; DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES This eBook may contain a "Defect" in the form of incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other infringement, a defective or damaged disk, computer virus, or codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment. But for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described below, the Project (and any other party you may receive this eBook from as a PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm eBook) disclaims all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees, and YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE OR UNDER STRICT LIABILITY, OR FOR BREACH OF WARRANTY OR CONTRACT, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES, EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES.

If you discover a Defect in this eBook within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending an explanatory note within that time to the person you received it from. If you received it on a physical medium, you must return it with your note, and such person may choose to alternatively give you a

replacement copy. If you received it electronically, such person may choose to alternatively give you a second opportunity to receive it electronically.

THIS EBOOK IS OTHERWISE PROVIDED TO YOU "AS-IS". NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, ARE MADE TO YOU AS TO THE EBOOK OR ANY MEDIUM IT MAY BE ON, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. Some states do not allow disclaimers of implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of consequential damages, so the above disclaimers and exclusions may not apply to you, and you may have other legal rights.

INDEMNITY You will indemnify and hold Michael Hart and the Foundation, and its trustees and agents, and any volunteers associated with the production and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm texts harmless, from all liability, cost and expense, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following that you do or cause: [1] distribution of this eBook, [2] alteration, modification, or addition to the eBook, or [3] any Defect.

WHAT IF YOU *WANT* TO SEND MONEY EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE TO? Project Gutenberg is dedicated to increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form.

The Project gratefully accepts contributions of money, time, public domain materials, or royalty free copyright licenses. Money should be paid to the: "Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

If you are interested in contributing scanning equipment or software or other items, please contact Michael Hart at: hart@pobox.com

*SMALL PRINT! Ver.03.17.02 FOR COPYRIGHT PROTECTED EBOOKS*END*

The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Practice of the Presence of God the Best Rule of a Holy Life, by Herman Nicholas

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.net

Title: The Practice of the Presence of God the Best Rule of a Holy Life

Author: Herman Nicholas

Release Date: October 26, 2004 [EBook #13871]

Language: English

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK
PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD ***

Produced by Robert Shimmin, Project Manager, Keith M.
Eckrich, Post-Processor, and the Project Gutenberg
Online Distributed Proofreading Team

**THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE
OF GOD THE BEST RULE
OF A HOLY LIFE.**

BROTHER LAWRENCE.

Being Conversations and Letters of Nicholas Herman, of
Lorraine
(Brother Lawrence). *Translated from the French.*

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY,

NEW YORK. CHICAGO. TORONTO.

Publishers of Evangelical Literature.

PREFACE.

This book consists of notes of several conversations had with, and letters written by Nicholas Herman, of Lorraine, a lowly and unlearned man, who, after having been a footman and soldier, was admitted a Lay Brother among the barefooted Carmelites at Paris in 1666, and was afterwards known as "Brother Lawrence."

His conversion, which took place when he was about eighteen years old, was the result, under God, of the mere sight in midwinter, of a dry and leafless tree, and of the reflections it stirred respecting the change the coming spring would bring. From that time he grew eminently in the knowledge and love of GOD, endeavoring constantly to walk "*as in His presence.*" No wilderness wanderings seem to have intervened between the Red Sea and the Jordan of his experience. A wholly consecrated man, he lived his Christian life through as a pilgrim—as a steward and not as an owner, and died at the age of eighty, leaving a name which has been as "ointment poured forth."

The "Conversations" are supposed to have been written by M. Beaufort, Grand Vicar to M. de Chalons, formerly Cardinal de Noailles, by whose recommendation the letters were first published.

The book has, within a short time, gone through repeated English and American editions, and has been a means of blessing to many souls. It contains very much of that wisdom which only lips the Lord has touched can express,

and which only hearts He has made teachable can receive.

May this edition also be blessed by GOD, and redound to the praise of the glory of His grace.

CONVERSATIONS.

FIRST CONVERSATION.

The first time I saw *Brother Lawrence*, was upon the 3d of August, 1666. He told me that GOD had done him a singular favor, in his conversion at the age of eighteen.

That in the winter, seeing a tree stripped of its leaves, and considering that within a little time the leaves would be renewed and after that the flowers and fruit appear, he received a high view of the Providence and Power of GOD, which has never since been effaced from his soul. That this view had perfectly set him loose from the world, and kindled in him such a love for GOD, that he could not tell whether it had increased during the more than forty years he had lived since.

That he had been footman to M. Fieubert, the treasurer, and that he was a great awkward fellow who broke everything.

That he had desired to be received into a monastery, thinking that he would there be made to smart for his

awkwardness and the faults he should commit, and so he should sacrifice to GOD his life, with its pleasures: but that God had disappointed him, he having met with nothing but satisfaction in that state.

That we should establish ourselves in a sense of GOD'S Presence, by continually conversing with Him. That it was a shameful thing to quit His conversation, to think of trifles and fooleries.

That we should feed and nourish our souls with high notions of GOD; which would yield us great joy in being devoted to Him.

That we ought to *quicken*, i.e., *to enliven, our faith*. That it was lamentable we had so little; and that instead of taking *faith* for the rule of their conduct, men amused themselves with trivial devotions, which changed daily. That the way of Faith was the spirit of the Church, and that it was sufficient to bring us to a high degree of perfection.

That we ought to give ourselves up to GOD, with regard both to things temporal and spiritual, and seek our satisfaction only in the fulfilling of His will, whether he lead us by suffering or by consolation, for all would lie equal to a soul truly resigned. That there needed fidelity in those dryness, or insensibilities and irksomenesses in prayer, by which GOD tries our love to him; that *then* was the time for us to make good and effectual acts of resignation, whereof one alone would oftentimes very much promote our spiritual advancement.

That as for the miseries and sins he heard of daily in the world, he was so far from wondering at them, that, on the contrary, he was surprised that there were not more, considering the malice sinners were capable of; that for his part he prayed for them; but knowing that GOD could remedy the mischiefs they did when He pleased, he gave himself no farther trouble.

That to arrive at such resignation as GOD requires, we should watch attentively over all the passions which mingle as well in spiritual things as in those of a grosser nature; that GOD would give light concerning those passions to those who truly desire to serve Him. That if this was my design, viz., sincerely to serve GOD, I might come to him (B. Lawrence) as often as I pleased, without any Fear of being troublesome; but if not, that I ought no more to visit him.

SECOND CONVERSATION.

That he had always been governed by love, without selfish views; and that having resolved to make the love of GOD the *end* of all his actions, he had found reasons to be well satisfied with his method. That he was pleased when he could take up a straw from the ground for the love of GOD, seeking Him only, and nothing else, not even His gifts.

That he had been long troubled in mind from a certain belief that he should be damned; that all the men in the world could not have persuaded him to the contrary; but

that he had thus reasoned with himself about it: *I engaged in a religious life only for the love of GOD, and I have endeavored to act only for Him; whatever becomes of me, whether I be lost or saved, I will always continue to act purely for the love of GOD. I shall have this good at least, that till death I shall have done all that is in me to love Him.* That this trouble of mind had lasted four years; during which time he had suffered much. But that at last he had seen that this trouble arose from want of faith; and that since then he had passed his life in perfect liberty and continual joy. That he had placed his sins betwixt him and GOD, as it were, to tell Him that he did not deserve His favors, but that GOD still continued to bestow them in abundance.

That in order to form a habit of conversing with GOD continually, and referring all we do to Him, we must at first apply to Him with some diligence: but that after a little care we should find His love inwardly excite us to it without any difficulty.

That he expected after the pleasant days GOD had given him, he should have his turn of pain and suffering; but that he was not uneasy about it, knowing very well, that as he could do nothing of himself, GOD would not fail to give him the strength to bear it.

That when an occasion of practicing some virtue offered, he addressed himself to GOD, saying, LORD, *I cannot do this unless Thou enablest me:* and that then he received strength more than sufficient.

That when he had failed in his duty, he only confessed his fault, saying to GOD, *I shall never do otherwise, if You leave me to myself; it is You who must hinder my falling, and mend what is amiss.* That after this, he gave himself no further uneasiness about it.

That we ought to act with GOD in the greatest simplicity, speaking to Him frankly and plainly, and imploring His assistance in our affairs, just as they happen. That GOD never failed to grant it, as he had often experienced.

That he had been lately sent into Burgundy, to buy the provision of wine for the society, which was a very unwelcome task for him, because he had no turn for business, and because he was lame and could not go about the boat but by rolling himself over the casks. That however he gave himself no uneasiness about it, nor about the purchase of the wine. That he said to GOD, *It was His business he was about,* and that he afterwards found it very well performed. That he had been sent into Auvergne, the year before, upon the same account; that he could not tell how the matter passed, but that it proved very well.

So, likewise, in his business in the kitchen (to which he had naturally a great aversion), having accustomed himself to do everything there for the love of GOD, and with prayer, upon all occasions, for His grace to do his work well, he had found everything easy, during fifteen years that he had been employed there.

That he was very well pleased with the post he was now in; but that he was as ready to quit that as the former, since he was always pleasing himself in every condition, by doing little things for the love of GOD.

That with him the set times of prayer were not different from other times; that he retired to pray, according to the directions of his Superior, but that he did not want such retirement, nor ask for it, because his greatest business did not divert him from GOD.

That as he knew his obligation to love GOD in all things, and as he endeavored so to do, he had no need of a director to advise him, but that he needed much a Confessor to absolve him. That he was very sensible of his faults, but not discouraged by them; that he confessed them to GOD, but did not plead against Him to excuse them. When he had so done, he peaceably resumed his usual practice of love and adoration.

That in his trouble of mind, he had consulted nobody, but knowing only by the light of faith that GOD was present, he contented himself with directing all his actions to Him, *i.e.*, doing them with a desire to please Him, let what would come of it.

That useless thoughts spoil all: that the mischief began there; but that we ought to reject them, as soon as we perceived their impertinence to the matter in hand, or our salvation; and return to our communion with GOD.

That at the beginning he had often passed his time appointed for prayer, in rejecting wandering thoughts, and falling back into them. That he could never regulate his devotion by certain methods as some do. That nevertheless, at first he had *meditated* for some time, but afterwards that went off, in a manner he could give no account of.

That all bodily mortifications and other exercises are useless, except as they serve to arrive at the union with GOD by love; that he had well considered this, and found it the shortest way to go straight to Him by a continual exercise of love, and doing all things for His sake.

That we ought to make a great difference between the acts of the *understanding* and those of the *will*: that the first were comparatively of little value, and the others, all. That our only business was to love and delight ourselves in GOD.

That all possible kinds of mortification, if they were void of the love of GOD, could not efface a single sin. That we ought, without anxiety, to expect the pardon of our sins from the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, only endeavoring to love Him with all our hearts. That GOD seemed to have granted the greatest favors to the greatest sinners, as more signal monuments of his mercy.

That the greatest pains or pleasures of this world, were not to be compared with what he had experienced of both kinds in a spiritual state: so that he was careful for nothing

and feared nothing, desiring only one thing of GOD, viz., that he might not offend Him.

That he had no scruples; for, said he, when I *fail* in my duty, I readily acknowledge it, saying, *I am used to do so: I shall never do otherwise, if I am left to myself.* I fail not, then I give GOD thanks, acknowledging the strength comes from Him.

THIRD CONVERSATION.

He told me that the *foundation of the spiritual life* in him, had been a high notion and esteem of GOD in faith; which when he had once well conceived, he had no other care at first, but faithfully to reject every other thought, *that he might perform all his actions for the love of GOD.* That when sometimes he had not thought of GOD for a good while, he did not disquiet himself for it; but after having acknowledged his wretchedness to GOD, he returned to Him with so much the greater trust in Him, as he had found himself wretched through forgetting Him.

That the trust we put in GOD, honors Him much, and draws down great graces.

That it was impossible, not only that GOD should deceive, hut also that He should long let a soul suffer which is perfectly resigned to Him, and resolved to endure everything for His sake.

That he had so often experienced the ready succors of Divine Grace upon all occasions, that from the same experience, when he had business to do, he did not think of it beforehand; but when it was time to do it, he found in GOD, as in a clear mirror, all that was fit for him to do. That of late he had acted thus, without anticipating care; but before the experience above mentioned, he had used it in his affairs.

When outward business diverted him a little from the thought of GOD, a fresh remembrance coming from GOD invested his soul, and so inflamed and transported him that it was difficult for him to contain himself.

That he was more united to GOD in his outward employments, than when he left them for devotion in retirement.

That he expected hereafter some great pain of body or mind; that the worst that could happen to him was, to lose that sense of GOD which he had enjoyed so long; but that the goodness of GOD assured him He would not forsake him utterly, and that He would give him strength to bear whatever evil He permitted to happen to him; and therefore that he feared nothing, and had no occasion to consult with anybody about his state. That when he had attempted to do it, he had always come away more perplexed; and that as he was conscious of his readiness to lay down his life for the love of GOD, he had no apprehension of danger. That perfect resignation to GOD was a sure way to heaven, a way in which we had always sufficient light for our conduct.

That in the beginning of the spiritual life, we ought to be faithful in doing our duty and denying ourselves; but after that, unspeakable pleasures followed; that in difficulties we need only have recourse to JESUS CHRIST, and beg his grace; with that everything became easy.

That many do not advance in the Christian progress because they stick in penances, and particular exercises, while they neglect the love of GOD, which is the *end*. That this appeared plainly by their works, and was the *reason* why we see so little solid virtue.

That there needed neither art nor science for going to GOD, but only a heart resolutely determined to apply itself to nothing but Him, or for *His* sake, and to love him only.

FOURTH CONVERSATION.

He discoursed with me very frequently, and with great openness of heart concerning his manner of *going* to GOD, whereof some part is related already.

He told me that all consists *in one hearty renunciation* of everything which we are sensible does not lead to GOD; that we might accustom ourselves to a continual conversation with Him, with freedom and in simplicity. That we need only to recognize GOD intimately present with us, to address ourselves to Him every moment, that we may beg His assistance for knowing His will in things doubtful, and for rightly performing those which we plainly see he

requires of us, offering them to Him before we do them, and giving Him thanks when we have done.

That in this conversation with God, we are also employed in praising, adoring and loving Him incessantly, for His infinite goodness and perfection.

That, without being discouraged on account of our sins, we should pray for His grace with a perfect confidence, as relying upon the infinite merits of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. That GOD never failed offering us His grace at each action; that he distinctly perceived it, and never failed of it, unless when his thoughts had wandered from a sense of GOD'S Presence, or he had forgotten to ask His assistance.

That GOD always gave us light in our doubts, when we had no other design but ask to please Him.

That our sanctification did not depend upon *changing* our works, but in doing that for GOD's sake, which we commonly do for our own. That it was lamentable to see how many people mistook the means for the end, addicting themselves to certain works, which they performed very imperfectly, by reason of their human or selfish regards.

That the most excellent method he had found of going to GOD, was that of doing our common business without any view of pleasing men,[1] and (as far as we are capable) purely for the love of GOD.

That it was a great delusion to think that the times of prayer ought to differ from other times: that we are as strictly obliged to adhere to GOD by action in the time of action, as by prayer in the season of prayer.

That his prayer was nothing else but a sense of the presence of GOD, his soul being at that time insensible to everything but Divine love: and that when the appointed times of prayer were past, he found no difference, because he still continued with GOD, praising and blessing Him with all his might, so that he passed his life in continual joy; yet hoped that GOD would give him somewhat to suffer, when he should grow stronger.

That we ought, once for all, heartily to put our whole trust in GOD, and make a total surrender of ourselves to Him, secure that He would not deceive us.

That we ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of GOD, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed. That we should not wonder if, in the beginning, we often failed in our endeavors, but that at last we should gain a habit, which will naturally produce its acts in us, without our care, and to our exceeding great delight.

That the whole substance of religion was faith, hope and charity; by the practice of which we become united to the will of GOD: that all besides is indifferent, and to be used as a means that we may arrive at our end, and be swallowed up therein, by faith and charity.

That all things are possible to him who *believes*—that they are less difficult to him who *hopes*—that they are more easy to him who *loves*, and still more easy to him who perseveres in the practice of these three virtues.

That the end we ought to propose to ourselves is to become, in this life, the most perfect worshippers of GOD we can possibly be, as we hope to be through all eternity.

That when we enter upon the spiritual life, we should consider, and examine to the bottom, what we are. And then we should find ourselves worthy of all contempt, and not deserving indeed the name of Christians: subject to all kinds of misery and numberless accidents, which trouble us and cause perpetual vicissitudes in our health, in our humors, in our internal and external dispositions; in fine, persons whom GOD would humble by many pains and labors, as well within as without. After this we should not wonder that troubles, temptations, oppositions and contradictions happen to us from men. We ought, on the contrary, to submit ourselves to them, and bear them as long as GOD pleases, as things highly advantageous to us.

That the greater perfection a soul aspires after, the more dependent it is upon Divine grace.

[2]Being questioned by one of his own society (to whom he was obliged to open himself) by what means he had attained such an habitual sense of GOD, he told him that, since his first coming to the monastery, he had considered GOD as the end of all his thoughts and desires, as the

mark to which they should tend, and in which they should terminate.

That in the beginning of his noviciate, he spent the hours appointed for private prayer in thinking of GOD, so as to convince his mind of, and to impress deeply upon his heart, the Divine existence, rather by devout sentiments, and submission to the lights of faith, than by studied reasonings and elaborate meditations. That by this short and sure method, he exercised himself in the knowledge and love of GOD, resolving to use his utmost endeavor to live, in a continual sense of His Presence, and if possible, never to forget Him more.

That when he had thus in prayer filled his mind with great sentiments of that infinite Being, he went to his work appointed in the kitchen (for he was cook to the society); there having first considered severally the things his office required, and when and how each thing was to be done, he spent all the intervals of his time, as well before as after his work, in prayer.

That when he began his business, he said to GOD, with a filial trust in Him, "O my GOD, since Thou art with me, and I must now, in obedience to Thy commands, apply my mind to these outward things, I beseech Thee to grant me the grace to continue in Thy Presence; and to this end do Thou prosper me with Thy assistance, receive all my works, and possess all my affections."

As he proceeded in his work, he continued his familiar conversation with his Maker,—imploring His grace, and offering to Him all his actions.

When he had finished, he examined himself how he had discharged his duty; if he found *well*, he returned thanks to GOD; if otherwise, he asked pardon; and without being discouraged, he set his mind right again, and continued his exercise of the *presence* of GOD, as if he had never deviated from it. "Thus," said he, "by rising after my falls, and by frequently renewed acts of faith and love, I am come to a state wherein it would be as difficult for me not to think of GOD as it was at first to accustom myself to it."

As brother Lawrence had found such an advantage in walking in the presence of GOD, it was natural for him to recommend it earnestly to others; but his example was a stronger inducement than any arguments he could propose. His very countenance was edifying, such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it as could not but effect the beholders. And it was observed that in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen, he still preserved his recollection and heavenly-mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season, with an even, uninterrupted composure and tranquility of spirit. "The time of business," said he, "does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess GOD in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."

LETTERS.

FIRST LETTER.

Since you desire so earnestly that I should communicate to you the method by which I arrived at that *habitual sense of GOD'S Presence*, which our LORD, of His mercy, has been pleased to vouch-safe to me, I must tell you that it is with great difficulty that I am prevailed on by your importunities; and now I do it only upon the terms that you show my letter to nobody. If I knew that you should let it be seen, all the desire that I have for your advancement would not be able to determine me to it. The account I can give you is:

Having found in many books different methods of going to GOD, and divers practices of the spiritual life, I thought this would serve rather to puzzle me than facilitate what I sought after, which was nothing but how to become wholly GOD'S. This made me resolve to give the all for the all; so after having given myself wholly to GOD, that He might take away my sin, *I renounced, for the love of Him, everything that was not He; and I began to live as if there was none but He and I in the world.* Sometimes I considered myself before Him as a poor criminal at the feet of his judge; at other times I beheld Him in my heart as my FATHER, as my GOD: I worshipped Him the oftenest that I could, keeping my mind in His holy Presence, and recalling it as often as I found it wandered

from Him. I found no small pain in this exercise, and yet I continued it, notwithstanding all the difficulties that occurred, without troubling or disquieting myself when my mind had wandered involuntarily. I made this my business as much all the day long as at the appointed times of prayer; for at all times, every hour, every minute, even in the height of my business, I drove away from my mind everything that was capable of interrupting my thought of GOD.

Such has been my common practice ever since I entered in religion; and, though I have done it very imperfectly, yet I have found great advantages by it. These, I well know, are to be imputed to the mere mercy and goodness of GOD, because we can do nothing without Him; and I still less than any. But when we are faithful to keep ourselves in His holy Presence, and set Him always before us, this not only hinders our offending Him, and doing anything that may displease Him, at least wilfully, but it also begets in us a holy freedom, and, if I may so speak, a familiarity with GOD, wherewith we ask, and that successfully, the graces we stand in need of. In fine, by often repeating these acts, they become *habitual*, and the presence of GOD rendered as it were *natural* to us Give Him thanks, if you please, with me, for His great goodness towards me, which I can never sufficiently admire, for the many favors He has done to so miserable a sinner as I am. May all things praise Him. Amen.

I am, in our LORD, yours, &c.

SECOND LETTER.

To the Reverend—

Not finding my manner of life in books, although I have no difficulty about it, yet, for greater security, I shall be glad to know your thoughts concerning it.

In a conversation some days since with a person of piety, he told me the spiritual life was a life of grace, which begins with servile fear, which is increased by hope of eternal life, and which is consummated by pure love. That each of these states had its different stages, by which one arrives at last at that blessed consummation.

I have not followed all these methods. On the contrary, from I know not what instincts, I found they discouraged me. This was the reason why, at my entrance into religion, I took a resolution to give myself up to GOD, as the best return I could make for His love; and, for the love of Him, to renounce all besides.

For the first year I commonly employed myself during the time set apart for devotion with the thought of death, judgment, heaven, hell, and my sins, Thus continued some years, applying my mind carefully the rest of the day, and even in the midst of my business, *to the presence of GOD*, whom I considered always as *with* me, often as *in* me.

At length I came insensibly to do the same thing during my set time of prayer, which caused in me great delight and

consolation. This practice produced in me so high an esteem for GOD, that *faith* alone was capable to satisfy me in that point.[3]

Such was my beginning; and yet I must tell you that for the first ten years I suffered much: the apprehension that I was not devoted to GOD as I wished to be, my past sins always present to my mind, and the great unmerited favors which GOD did me, were the matter and source of my sufferings. During this time I fell often, and rose again presently. It seemed to me that all creatures, reason, and GOD Himself were against me; and *faith* alone for me. I was troubled sometimes with thoughts that to believe I had received such favors was an effect of my presumption, which pretended to be *at once* where others arrive with difficulty; at other times that it was a wilful delusion, and that there was no salvation for me.

When I thought of nothing but to end my days in these troubles (which did not at all diminish the trust I had in GOD, and which served only to increase my faith), I found myself changed all at once; and my soul, which, till that time, was in trouble, felt a profound inward peace, as if she were in her centre and place of rest.

Ever since that time I walk before GOD simply, in faith, with humility and with love; and I apply myself diligently to do nothing and think nothing which may displease Him. I hope that when I have done what I can, He will do with me what He pleases.

As for what passes in me at present, I cannot express it. I have no pain or difficulty about my state, because I have no will but that of GOD, which I endeavor to accomplish in all things, and to which I am so resigned that I would not take up a straw from the ground against His order, or from any other motive than purely that of love to Him.

I have quitted all forms of devotion and set prayers but those to which my state obliges me. And I make it my business only to persevere in His holy presence, wherein I keep myself by a simple attention, and a general fond regard to GOD, which I may call an *actual presence of GOD*; or, to speak better, an habitual, silent and secret conversation of the soul with GOD, which often causes me joys and raptures inwardly, and sometimes also outwardly, so great, that I am forced to use means to moderate them and prevent their appearance to others.

In short, I am assured beyond all doubt that my soul has been with GOD above these thirty years. I pass over many things that I may not be tedious to you, yet I think it proper to inform you after what manner I consider myself before GOD, whom I behold as my King.

I consider myself as the most wretched of men, full of sores and corruption, and who has committed all sorts of crimes against his King; touched with a sensible regret, I confess to him all my wickedness, I ask His forgiveness, I abandon myself in His hands that He may do what he pleases with me. The King, full of mercy and goodness, very far from chastising me, embraces me with love, makes me eat at His table, serves me with His own hands,

gives me the key of His treasures; He converses and delights Himself with me incessantly, in a thousand and a thousand ways, and treats me in all respects as His favorite. It is thus I consider myself from time to time in His holy presence.

My most useful method is this simple attention, and such a general passionate regard to GOD; to whom I find myself often attached with greater sweetness and delight than that of an infant at the mother's breast; so that, if I dare use the expression, I should choose to call this state the bosom, of GOD, for the inexpressible sweetness which I taste and experience there.

If sometimes my thoughts wander from it by necessity or infirmity, I am presently recalled by inward motions so charming and delicious that I am ashamed to mention them. I desire your reverence to reflect rather upon my great wretchedness, of which you are fully informed, than upon the great favors which GOD does me, all unworthy and ungrateful as I am.

As for my set hours of prayer, they are only a continuation of the same exercise. Sometimes I consider myself there as a stone before a carver, whereof he is to make a statue; presenting myself thus before GOD, I desire Him to form His perfect image in my soul, and make me entirely like Himself.

At other times, when I apply myself to prayer, I feel all my spirit and all my soul lift itself up without any care or effort

of mine, and it continues as it were suspended and firmly fixed in GOD, as in its centre and place of rest.

I know that some charge this state with inactivity, delusion and self-love. I confess that it is a holy inactivity, and would be a happy self-love, if the soul in that state were capable of it; because, in effect, while she is in this repose, she cannot be disturbed by such acts as she was formerly accustomed to, and which were then her support, but which would now rather hinder than assist her.

Yet I cannot bear that this should be called delusion; because the soul which thus enjoys GOD desires herein nothing but Him. If this be delusion in me, it belongs to GOD to remedy it. Let Him do what He pleases with me; I desire only Him, and to be wholly devoted to Him. You will, however, oblige me in sending me your opinion, to which I always pay a great deference, for I have a singular esteem for your reverence, and am in our LORD,

Yours, &c.

THIRD LETTER.

We have a GOD who is infinitely gracious and knows all our wants. I always thought that He would reduce you to extremity. He will come in His own time, and when you least expect it. Hope in Him more than ever; thank Him with me for the favors he does you, particularly for the fortitude and patience which He gives you in your

afflictions. It is a plain mark of the care He takes of you. Comfort yourself, then, with Him, and give thanks for all.

I admire also the fortitude and bravery of Mr. ——. God has given him a good disposition and a good will; but there is in him still a little of the world, and a great deal of youth. I hope the affliction which GOD has sent him will prove a wholesome remedy to him, and make him enter into himself. It is an accident which should engage him to put all his trust in *Him* who accompanies him everywhere. Let him think of Him as often as he can, especially in the greatest dangers. A little lifting up of the heart suffices. A little remembrance of GOD, one act of inward worship, though upon a march, and a sword in hand, are prayers, which, however short, are nevertheless very acceptable to GOD; and far from lessening a soldier's courage in occasions of danger, they best serve to fortify it.

Let him then think of GOD the most he can. Let him accustom himself, by degrees, to this small but holy exercise. No one will notice it, and nothing is easier than to repeat often in the day these little internal adorations. Recommend to him, if you please, that he think of GOD the most he can, in the manner here directed. It is very fit and most necessary for a soldier, who is daily exposed to the dangers of life. I hope that GOD will assist him and all the family, to whom I present my service, being theirs and Yours, &c.

FOURTH LETTER.

I have taken this opportunity to communicate to you the sentiments of one of our society, concerning the admirable effects and continual assistances which he receives from *the presence of GOD*. Let you and me both profit by them.

You must know his continual care has been, for about forty years past that he has spent in religion, to be *always with GOD*, and to do nothing, say nothing, and think nothing which may displease Him; and this without any other view than purely for the love of Him, and because he deserves infinitely more.

He is now so accustomed to that *Divine Presence*, that he receives from it continual succors upon all occasions. For about thirty years, his soul has been filled with joys so continual, and sometimes so great, that he is forced to use means to moderate them, and to hinder their appearing outwardly.

If sometimes he is a little too much absent from that *Divine Presence*, GOD presently makes Himself to be felt in his soul to recall him, which often happens when he is most engaged in his outward business. He answers with exact fidelity to these inward drawings, either by an elevation of his heart towards GOD, or by a meek and fond regard to Him, or by such words as love forms upon these occasions, as for instance, *My God, here I am all devoted to Thee: LORD, make me according to Thy heart*. And then it seems to him (as in effect he feels it) that this GOD

of love, satisfied with such few words, reposes again, and rests in the fund and centre of his soul. The experience of these things gives him such an assurance that GOD is always in the fund or bottom of his soul, that it renders him incapable of doubting it upon any account whatever.

Judge by this what content and satisfaction he enjoys while he continually finds in himself so great a treasure. He is no longer in an anxious search after it, but has it open before him, and may take what he pleases of it.

He complains much of our blindness, and cries often that we are to be pitied who content ourselves with so little. GOD, saith he, *has infinite treasure to bestow, and we take up with a little sensible devotion, which passes in a moment. Blind as we are, we hinder GOD, and stop the current of His graces. But when He finds a soul penetrated with a lively faith, He pours into it His graces and favors plentifully: there they flow like a torrent, which, after being forcibly stopped against its ordinary course, when it has found a passage, spreads itself with impetuosity and abundance.*

Yes, we often stop this torrent by the little value we set upon it. But let us stop it no more; let us enter into ourselves and break down the bank which hinders it. Let us make way for grace; let us redeem the lost time, for perhaps we have but little left. Death follows us close; let us be well prepared for it: for we die but once; and a miscarriage *there* is irretrievable.

I say again, let us enter into ourselves. The time presses, there is no room for delay: our souls are at stake. I believe you have taken such effectual measures that you will not be surprised. I commend you for it; it is the one thing necessary. We must, nevertheless, always work at it, because not to advance in the spiritual life is to go back. But those who have the gale of the HOLY SPIRIT go forward even in sleep. If the vessel of our soul is still tossed with winds and storms, let us awake the LORD, who reposes in it, and He will quickly calm the sea.

I have taken the liberty to impart to you these good sentiments, that you may compare them with your own. It will serve again to kindle and inflame them, if by misfortune (which GOD forbid, for it would be indeed a great misfortune) they should be, though never so little, cooled. Let us then *both* recall our first fervors. Let us profit by the example and the sentiments of this brother, who is little known of the world, but known of GOD, and extremely caressed by Him. I will pray for you; do you pray instantly for me, who am, in our LORD.

Yours, &c.

FIFTH LETTER.

I received this day two books and a letter from Sister ——, who is preparing to make her profession, and upon that account desires the prayers of your holy society, and yours in particular. I perceive that she reckons much upon

them; pray do not disappoint her. Beg of GOD that she may make her sacrifice in the view of His love alone, and with a firm resolution to be wholly devoted to Him. I will send you one of these books which treat of *the presence of GOD*; a subject which, in my opinion, contains the whole spiritual life; and it seems to me that whoever duly practices it will soon become spiritual.

I know that for the right practice of it, the heart must be empty of all other things; because GOD will possess the heart *alone*; and as He cannot possess it *alone* without emptying it of all besides, so neither can He act *there*, and do in it what He pleases, unless it be left vacant to Him.

There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with GOD. Those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it; yet I do not advise you to do it from that motive. It is not pleasure which we ought to seek in this exercise; but let us do it from a principle of love, and because GOD would have us.

Were I a preacher, I should, above all other things, preach the practice of *the presence of GOD*; and, were I a director, I should advise all the world to do it, so necessary do I think it, and so easy too.

Ah! knew we but the want we have of the grace and assistance of GOD, we should never lose sight of Him, no, not for a moment. Believe me; make immediately a holy and firm resolution never more wilfully to forget Him, and to spend the rest of your days in His sacred presence,

deprived for the love of Him, if He thinks fit, of all consolations.

Set heartily about this work, and if you do it as you ought, be assured that you will soon find the effects of it. I will assist you with my prayers, poor as they are. I recommend myself earnestly to yours and those of your holy society being theirs, and more particularly

Yours, &c.

SIXTH LETTER.

To the Same.

I have received from Mrs. ——, the things which you gave her for me. I wonder that you have not given me your thoughts of the little book I sent to you, and which you must have received. Pray set heartily about the practice of it in your old age: it is better late than never.

I cannot imagine how religious persons can live satisfied without the practice of *the presence of GOD*. For my part. I keep myself retired with Him in the fund or centre of my soul as much as I can; and while I am so with Him I fear nothing, but the least turning from Him is insupportable.

This exercise does not much fatigue the body; it is, however, proper to deprive it sometimes, nay often; of many little pleasures which are innocent and lawful, for GOD will not permit that a soul which desires to be

devoted entirely to Him should take other pleasures than with Him: that is more than reasonable.

I do not say that therefore we must put any violent constraint upon ourselves. No, we must serve GOD in a holy freedom; we must do our business faithfully; without trouble or disquiet, recalling our mind to GOD mildly, and with tranquility, as often as we find it wandering from Him.

It is, however, necessary to put our whole trust in GOD, laying aside all other cares, and even some particular forms of devotion, though very good in themselves, yet such as one often engages in unreasonably, because these devotions are only means to attain to the end. So when by this exercise of *the presence of GOD* we are *with Him* who is our end, it is then useless to return to the means; but we may continue with Him our commerce of love, persevering in His holy presence, one while by an act of praise, of adoration or of desire; one while by an act of resignation or thanksgiving; and in all the ways which our spirit can invent.

Be not discouraged by the repugnance which you may find in it from nature; you must do yourself violence. At the first one often thinks it lost time, but you must go on, and resolve to persevere in it to death, notwithstanding all the difficulties that may occur. I recommend myself to the prayers of your holy society, and yours in particular. I am, in our LORD,

Yours, &c.

SEVENTH LETTER.

I pity you much. It will be of great importance if you can leave the care of your affairs to —, and spend the remainder of your life only in worshiping GOD. He requires no great matters of us; a little remembrance of Him from time to time; a little adoration; sometimes to pray for His grace, sometimes to offer Him your sufferings, and sometimes to return Him thanks for the favors He has given you, and still gives you, in the midst of your troubles, and to console yourself with Him the oftenest you can. Lift up your heart to Him, sometimes even at your meals, and when you are in company: the least little remembrance will always be acceptable to Him. You need not cry very loud; He is nearer to us than we are aware of.

It is not necessary for being with GOD to be always at church: we may make an oratory of our heart wherein to retire from time to time to converse with Him in meekness, humility and love. Every one is capable of such familiar conversation with GOD, some more, some less: He knows what we can do. Let us begin, then. Perhaps He expects but one generous resolution on our part. Have courage. We have but little time to live; you are near sixty-four, and I am almost eighty. Let us live and die with GOD. Sufferings will be sweet and pleasant to us while we are with Him; and the greatest pleasures will be, without Him, a cruel punishment to us. May He be blessed for all. Amen.

Accustom yourself, then, by degrees thus to worship Him, to beg His grace, to offer Him your heart from time to time in the midst of your business, even every moment, if you can. Do not always scrupulously confine yourself to certain rules, or particular forms of devotion, but act with a general confidence in GOD, with love and humility. You may assure —— of my poor prayers, and that I am their servant, and particularly

Yours in our LORD, &c.

EIGHTH LETTER.

(Concerning wandering thoughts in Prayer.)

You tell me nothing new; you are not the only one that is troubled with wandering thoughts. Our mind is extremely roving; but, as the will is mistress of all our faculties, she must recall them, and carry them to GOD as their last end.

When the mind, for want of being sufficiently reduced by recollection at our first engaging in devotion, has contracted certain bad habits of wandering and dissipation, they are difficult to overcome, and commonly draw us, even against our wills, to the things of the earth.

I believe one remedy for this is to confess our faults, and to humble ourselves before GOD. I do not advise you to use multiplicity of words in prayer: many words and long discourses being often the occasions of wandering. Hold yourself in prayer before GOD, like a dumb or paralytic

beggar at a rich man's gate. Let it be *your* business to keep your mind in the presence of the LORD. If it sometimes wander and withdraw itself from Him, do not much disquiet yourself for that: trouble and disquiet serve rather to distract the mind than to re-collect it: the will must bring it back in tranquility. If you persevere in this manner, GOD will have pity on you.

One way to re-collect the mind easily in the time of prayer, and preserve it more in tranquility, is *not to let it wander too far at other times*: you should keep it strictly in the presence of GOD; and being accustomed to think of Him often, you will find it easy to keep your mind calm in the time of prayer, or at least to recall it from its wanderings.

I have told you already at large, in my former letters, of the advantages we may draw from this practice of the presence of GOD: let us set about it seriously, and pray for one another.

Yours, &c.

NINTH LETTER.

The enclosed is an answer to that which I received from — —; pray deliver it to her. She seems to me full of good will, but she would go faster than grace. One does not become holy all at once. I recommend her to you: we ought to help one another by our advice, and yet more by our good examples. You will oblige me to let me hear of her from

time to time, and whether she be very fervent and very obedient.

Let us thus think often that our only business in this life is to please GOD, and that all besides is but folly and vanity. You and I have lived about forty years in religion (*i.e.*, a monastic life). Have we employed them in loving and serving GOD, who by His mercy has called us to this state and for that very end? I am filled with shame and confusion when I reflect on one hand upon the great favors which GOD has done, and incessantly continues to do me; and on the other, upon the ill use I have made of them, and my small advancement in the way of perfection.

Since by His mercy He gives us still a little time, let us begin in earnest: let us repair the lost time: let us return with a full assurance to that FATHER of mercies, who is always ready to receive us affectionately. Let us renounce, let us generously renounce, for the love of Him, all that is not Himself; He deserves infinitely more. Let us think of Him perpetually. Let us put all our trust in Him. I doubt not but we shall soon find the effects of it in receiving the abundance of His grace, with which we can do all things, and without which we can do nothing but sin.

We cannot escape the dangers which abound in life without the actual and *continual* help of GOD: let us then pray to Him for it *continually*. How can we pray to Him without being with Him? How can we be with Him but in thinking of Him often? And how can we often think of Him, but by a holy habit which we should form of it? You will tell me that I am always saying the same thing. It is true, for

this is the best and easiest method I know; and as I use no other, I advise all the world to do it. We must *know* before we can *love*. In order to *know* GOD, we must often *think* of Him; and when we come to *love* Him, we shall then also think of Him often, for our heart will be with our treasure. This is an argument which well deserves your consideration.

I am, Yours, &c.

TENTH LETTER.

I have had a good deal of difficulty to bring myself to write to Mr. —, and I do it now purely because you and Madam — desire me. Pray write the directions and send it to him. I am very well pleased with the trust which you have in GOD: I wish that He may increase it in you more and more. We cannot have too much in so good and faithful a Friend, who will never fail us in this world nor in the next.

If Mr. — makes his advantage of the loss he has had, and puts all his confidence in GOD, He will soon give him another friend, more powerful and more inclined to serve him. He disposes of hearts as He pleases. Perhaps Mr. — was too much attached to him he has lost. We ought to love our friends, but without encroaching upon the love due to GOD, which must be the principal.

Pray remember what I have recommended to you, which is, to think often on GOD, by day, by night, in your

business, and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you: leave Him not alone. You would think it rude to leave a friend alone who came to visit you: why then must GOD be neglected? Do not then forget Him, but think on Him often, adore Him continually, live and die with Him; this is the glorious employment of a Christian. In a word, this is our profession; if we do not know it, we must learn it. I will endeavor to help you with my prayers, and am, in our LORD, Yours, &c.

ELEVENTH LETTER.

I do not pray that you may be delivered from your pains, but I pray GOD earnestly that He would give you strength and patience to bear them as long as He pleases. Comfort yourself with Him who holds you fastened to the cross. He will loose you when He thinks fit. Happy those who suffer with Him: accustom yourself to suffer in that manner, and seek from Him the strength to endure as much, and as long, as He shall judge to be necessary for you. The men of the world do not comprehend these truths, nor is it to be wondered at, since they suffer like what they are, and not like Christians. They consider sickness as a pain to nature, and not as a favor from GOD; and seeing it only in that light, they find nothing in it but grief and distress. But those who consider sickness as coming from the hand of GOD, as the effect of His mercy, and the means which He employs for their salvation—such, commonly find in it great sweetness and sensible consolation.

I wish you could convince yourself that GOD is often (in some sense) nearer to us, and more effectually present with us, in sickness than in health. Rely upon no other Physician; for, according to my apprehension, He reserves your cure to Himself. Put, then, all your trust in Him, and you will soon find the effects of it in your recovery, which we often retard by putting greater confidence in physic than in GOD.

Whatever remedies you make use of, they will succeed only so far as He permits. When pains come from GOD, He only can cure them. He often sends diseases of the body to cure those of the soul. Comfort yourself with the sovereign Physician both of the soul and body.

Be satisfied with the condition in which GOD places you: however happy you may think me, I envy you. Pains and sufferings would be a paradise to me while I should suffer with my GOD; and the greatest pleasures would be hell to me if I could relish them without Him. All my consolation would be to suffer something for His sake.

I must, in a little time, go to GOD. What comforts me in this life is, that I now see Him *by faith*; and I see Him in such a manner as might make me say sometimes, *I believe no more, but I see*. I feel what faith teaches us, and in that assurance and that practice of faith, I will live and die with Him.

Continue then always with GOD: it is the only support and comfort for your affliction. I shall beseech Him to be with you. I present my service.

Yours, &c.

TWELFTH LETTER.

If we were well accustomed to the exercise of *the presence of GOD*, all bodily diseases would be much alleviated thereby. GOD often permits that we should suffer a little to purify our souls and oblige us to continue *with Him*.

Take courage: offer Him your pains incessantly: pray to Him for strength to endure them. Above all, get a habit of entertaining yourself often with GOD, and forget Him the least you can. Adore Him in your infirmities, offer yourself to Him from time to time, and in the height of your sufferings, beseech Him humbly and affectionately (as a child his father) to make you conformable to His holy-will. I shall endeavor to assist you with my poor prayers.

GOD has many ways of drawing us to Himself. He sometimes hides Himself from us, but *faith* alone, which will not fail us in time of need, ought to be our support, and the foundation of our confidence, which must be all in GOD.

I know not how GOD will dispose of me. I am always happy. All the world suffer; and I, who deserve the severest discipline, feel joys so continual and so great that I can scarce contain them.

I would willingly ask of GOD a part of your sufferings, but that I know my weakness, which is so great, that if He left me one moment to myself I should be the most wretched man alive. And yet I know not how He can leave me alone, because faith gives me as strong a conviction as sense can do, that He never forsakes us until we have first forsaken Him. Let us fear to leave Him. Let us be always with Him. Let us live and die in His presence. Do you pray for me, as I for you.

I am, Yours, &c.

THIRTEENTH LETTER.

To the Same.

I am in pain to see you suffer so long. What gives me some ease and sweetens the feelings I have for your griefs is, that they are proofs of GOD'S love towards you. See them in that view and you will bear them more easily. As your case is, it is my opinion that you should leave off human remedies, and resign yourself entirely to the providence of GOD: perhaps He stays only for that resignation and a perfect trust in Him to cure you. Since, notwithstanding all your cares, physic has hitherto proved unsuccessful, and your malady still increases, it will not be tempting GOD to abandon yourself in His hands, and expect all from Him.

I told you in my last that He sometimes permits bodily diseases to cure the distempers of the soul. Have courage

then: make a virtue of necessity. Ask of GOD, not deliverance from your pains, but strength to bear resolutely, for the love of Him, all that He should please, and as long as He shall please.

Such prayers, indeed, are a little hard to nature, but most acceptable to GOD, and sweet to those that love Him. Love sweetens pains; and when one loves GOD, one suffers for His sake with joy and courage. Do you so, I beseech you: comfort yourself with Him, who is the only Physician of all our maladies. He is the FATHER of the afflicted, always ready to help us. He loves us infinitely more than we imagine. Love Him, then, and seek no consolation elsewhere. I hope you will soon receive it. Adieu. I will help you with my prayers, poor as they are, and shall always be, in our LORD Yours, &c.

FOURTEENTH LETTER.

To the Same.

I render thanks to our LORD for having relieved you a little, according to your desire. I have been often near expiring, but I never was so much satisfied as then. Accordingly, I did not pray for any relief, but I prayed for strength to suffer with courage, humility and love. Ah, how sweet it is to suffer with GOD! However great the sufferings may be, receive them with love. It is paradise to suffer and be with Him; so that if in this life we would enjoy the peace of paradise we must accustom ourselves to a

familiar, humble, affectionate conversation with Him. We must hinder our spirits wandering from Him upon any occasion. We must make our heart a spiritual temple, wherein to adore Him incessantly. We must watch continually over ourselves, that we may not do, nor say, nor think anything that may displease Him. When our minds are thus employed about GOD, suffering will become full of unction and consolation.

I know that to arrive at this state the beginning is very difficult, for we must act purely in faith. But though it is difficult, we know also that we can do all things with the grace of GOD, which He never refuses to them who ask it earnestly. Knock, persevere in knocking, and I answer for it that He will open to you in His due time, and grant you all at once what He has deferred during many years. Adieu! Pray to Him for me, as I pray to Him for you. I hope to see Him quickly.

I am, Yours, &c.

FIFTEENTH LETTER.

To the Same.

GOD knoweth best what is needful for us, and all that He does is for our good. If we knew how much He loves us, we should always be ready to receive equally and with indifference from His Hand the sweet and the bitter: all would please that came from Him. The sorest afflictions never appear intolerable, except when we see them in the

wrong light. When we see them as dispensed by the hand of GOD, when we know that it is our loving FATHER who abases and distresses us, our sufferings will lose their bitterness, and become even matter of consolation.

Let all our employment be to *know* GOD: the more one *knows* Him, the more one *desires* to know Him. And as *knowledge* is commonly the measure of *love*, the deeper and more extensive our *knowledge* shall be, the greater will be our *love*: and if our love of GOD were great, we should love Him equally in pains and pleasures.

Let us not content ourselves with loving GOD for the mere sensible favors, how elevated soever, which he has done, or may do us. Such favors, though never so great, cannot bring us so near to Him as faith does in one simple act. Let us seek Him often by faith. He is within us: seek Him not elsewhere. If we do love Him alone, are we not rude, and do we not deserve blame, if we busy ourselves about trifles which do not please and perhaps offend Him. It is to be feared these *trifles* will one day cost us dear.

Let us begin to be devoted to Him in good earnest. Let us cast everything besides out of our hearts. He would possess them alone. Beg this favor of Him. If we do what we can on our parts, we shall soon see that change wrought in us which we aspire after. I cannot thank Him sufficiently for the relaxation He has vouchsafed you. I hope from His mercy the favor to see Him within a few days.[4] Let us pray for one another.

I am, in our LORD, Yours, &c.

NOTES:

[1: Gal. i, 10; Eph. vi, 5, 6.]

[2: The particulars which follow are collected from other accounts of Brother Lawrence.]

[3: *I suppose he means* that all distinct notions he could form of GOD, were unsatisfactory, because he perceived them to be unworthy of GOD; and therefore his mind was not to be satisfied but by the views of *faith*, which apprehend GOD as infinite and incomprehensible, as He is in Himself, and not as He can be conceived by human ideas.]

[4: He took to his bed two days after, and died within the week.]

End of the Project Gutenberg EBook of The Practice of the Presence of God the Best Rule of a Holy Life, by Herman Nicholas

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK
PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD ***

***** This file should be named 13871.txt or 13871.zip

***** This and all associated files of various formats will be found in: <http://www.gutenberg.net/1/3/8/7/13871/>

Produced by Robert Shimmin, Project Manager, Keith M. Eckrich, Post-Processor, and the Project Gutenberg Online Distributed Proofreading Team

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from public domain print editions means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for the eBooks, unless you receive specific permission. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the rules is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. They may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING with public domain eBooks. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

***** START: FULL LICENSE *****

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg-tm License (available with this file or online at <http://gutenberg.net/license>).

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is in the public domain in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg-tm works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg-tm name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg-tm License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg-tm work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country outside the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg-tm License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg-tm work (any work on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.net

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is derived from the public domain (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the

copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg-tm License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg-tm License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg-tm.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg-tm License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg-tm work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg-tm web site (www.gutenberg.net), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg-tm License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg-tm works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg-tm works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which

you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg-tm License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and Michael Hart, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread public domain works in creating the Project Gutenberg-tm collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH F3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND

- If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg-tm work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg-tm work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm

Project Gutenberg-tm is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need, is critical to reaching Project Gutenberg-tm's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg-tm collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg-tm

and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at <http://www.pglaf.org>.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Its 501(c)(3) letter is posted at <http://pglaf.org/fundraising>. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is located at 4557 Melan Dr. S. Fairbanks, AK, 99712., but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at <http://pglaf.org>

For additional contact information:

Dr. Gregory B. Newby

Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg-tm depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit <http://pglaf.org>

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: <http://pglaf.org/donate>

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart is the originator of the Project Gutenberg-tm concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as Public Domain in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

<http://www.gutenberg.net>

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg-tm, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.

***** END: FULL LICENSE *****