

# Journal314: Part I, 1-6

- Jesus

1. Augustine
2. Miguel de Molinos
3. Leo Tolstoy
4. G.W. Chesterton
5. St John of the Cross
6. Seraphim Rose

[#journal314](#) , [#anthology](#) , [#314quotes](#)

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## Jesus

### *New Testament*

- Matt. vi. 25-34: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek), for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

- Luke xii. 33-34: "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not

old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Sell all thou hast and follow me; and he who will not leave father, or mother, or children, or brothers, or fields, or house, he cannot be my disciple. Deny thyself, take up thy cross each day and follow me. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to perform his works. Not my will, but thine be done; not what I will, but as thou wilt. Life is to do not one's will, but the will of God."

- "Go and sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me."

- *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*

- *"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but you do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."*

- *"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."*

- *"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."*

- "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead."

- *"Save us, Lord; we are perishing." And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"*

- *"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."*

- *"Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received*

their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret."

- *"Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."*

- *"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."*

- *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*

- *"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."*

- *"While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."*

- *"This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."*

- *"But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

- *"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"*

- *"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*

- *"Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God...And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."*

- *"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be there with content. But they that will be rich fall*

into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For *the love of money is the root of all evil*; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

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# 1. Augustine

## *Confessions*

-“...sent to set us an example of despising worldly things for the attainment of immortality...”

“For there is an attractiveness in beautiful bodies, in gold and silver, and all things; and in bodily touch, sympathy hath much influence, and each other sense hath his proper object answerably tempered. Worldly honour hath also its grace, and the power of overcoming, and of mastery; whence springs also the thirst of revenge. But yet, to obtain all these, we may not depart from Thee, O Lord, nor decline from Thy law. The life also which here we live hath its own enchantment, through a certain proportion of its own, and a correspondence with all things beautiful here below. Human friendship also is endeared with a sweet tie, by reason of the unity formed of many souls. Upon occasion of all these, and the like, is sin committed, while through an immoderate inclination towards these goods of the lowest order, the better and higher are forsaken,— Thou, our Lord God, Thy truth, and Thy law. For these lower things have their delights, but not like my God, who made all things; for in Him doth the righteous delight, and He is the joy of the upright in heart.”

- “Suddenly every vain hope became worthless to me.” (Heidegger)

- “Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, were righteous, and all those commended by the mouth of God; but were judged unrighteous by silly men, judging out of man's judgment, and measuring by their own petty habits, the moral habits of the whole human race.”

- “...a thing that was formerly lawful may become, after a time, unlawful...”

- “At this grief my heart was utterly darkened; and whatever I beheld was death.”

- “...wretched is every soul bound by the friendship of perishable things.”

- "For I wondered that others, subject to death, did live, since he whom I loved, as if he should never die, was dead. and I wondered yet *more that myself, who was to him a second self, could live, he being dead.* Well said one of his friend, "Thou half of my soul"; for I felt that my soul and his soul were "one soul in two bodies": and therefore was *my life a horror* to me, because I would not live halved."

- "If physical objects please you, praise God for them, but turn back your love to their creator."

- "And finding that Thou madest them, they give not themselves up to Thee, to preserve what Thou madest, nor sacrifice to Thee what they have made themselves; nor slay their own soaring imaginations, as fowls of the air, nor their own diving curiosities (wherewith, like the fishes of the seal they wander over the unknown paths of the abyss), nor their own luxuriousness, as beasts of the field, that Thou, Lord, a consuming fire, *mayest burn up those dead (mortal) cares of theirs, and re-create themselves immortally.*"

- "...with joy I blushed at having so many years barked not against the Catholic faith, but against the fictions of carnal (fleshly) imaginations."

- "...those passages in scripture...I could see that they were to be resolved by the mysteries of spiritual interpretation." (me- In non-earthly descriptions and conceptions)

- "I panted after honours, gains, marriage; and thou mocked me. Let my soul cleave unto Thee, now that Thou hast freed it from *that fast-sticking glue of death.*"

- "*How wretched was it! and Thou didst irritate the feeling of its wound, that forsaking all else, it might be converted unto Thee, who art above all, and without whom all things would be nothing; be converted, and be healed.*"

- "...the joy of a faithful hope lieth incomparably beyond such vanity."

- "Wherefore delay then to abandon worldly hopes, and give ourselves wholly to seek after God and the blessed life? But wait! Even those things are pleasant; they have some, and no small sweetness. We must not lightly abandon them, for it were a shame to return again to them."

- "I was now in my thirtieth year, sticking in the same mire, greedy of enjoying things present (present goods), which passed away and wasted (distracted) my soul."

- "...stuck so fast in the glue-pot of pleasure..."

- "...undertake a peaceful life, away from the crowds."

- "...*by inward stings you disturbed me so that I was impatient until you were made clear to my inward sight...my mind was made whole by the stinging salve of wholesome grief.*"

- "And being admonished by these books to return into myself, I entered into my inward soul, guided by you."

- *"And I enquired what iniquity was, and found it to be substance, but the perversion of the will, turned aside from Thee, O God, the Supreme, towards these lower things, and casting out its bowels (inmost treasure), and puffed up outwardly (bloated with external good)."*

- "And yet did I not press on to enjoy my God; but was borne up to Thee by Thy beauty, and soon borne down from Thee by mine own weight, sinking with sorrow into these inferior things. This weight was carnal custom."

- "...for that the body which is corrupted presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things. And most certain I was, that Thy invisible works from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even Thy eternal power and Godhead."

- *"But having then read those books of the Platonists, and thence been taught to search for incorporeal truth, I saw Thy invisible things, understood by those things which are made; and though cast back, I perceived what that was which through the darkness of my mind I was hindered from contemplating, being assured "That Thou wert, and wert infinite, and yet not diffused in space, finite or infinite; and that Thou truly art Who art the same ever, in no part nor motion varying; and that all other things are from Thee, on this most sure ground alone, that they are."*

- *"For it was not salvation that he taught in rhetoric (why, then, should he shrink from naming your name before the sheep of the flock), and yet that he had publicly professed: how much less then ought he, when pronouncing Thy word, to dread Thy meek flock, who, when delivering his own words, had not feared a mad multitude!"*

- "...a perversion of the will, bent aside from you, god, the supreme substance, toward these lower things, casting away its inmost treasure and becoming bloated with external good."

- "For the body which is corrupted presses down the soul, and the earthly dwelling weighs down the mind, which museth upon many things."

- "Simplicianus congratulated me that I had not fallen upon the writings of other philosophers, which were full of fallacies and deceit, 'after the beggarly elements of this world', whereas in the Platonists, at every turn, the pathway led to belief in God and his Word."

- "As they rambled, these first two came upon a certain cottage where lived some of thy servants, some of the "poor in spirit" ("of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"), where they found the book in which was written the life of Anthony! One of them began to read it, to marvel and to be inflamed by it. While reading, he meditated on embracing just such a life, giving up his worldly employment to seek thee alone...he was inwardly changed, as thou didst see, and the world dropped away from his mind ...Tell me,

I beg you, what goal are we seeking in all these toils of ours? What is it that we desire? What is our motive in public service? Can our hopes in the court rise higher than to be 'friends of the emperor'? But how frail, how beset with peril, is that pride! And with hearts inclining again toward earthly things, they returned to the palace. But the other two, setting their affections on heavenly things, remained in the cottage."

- "And I had thought that I delayed from day to day in rejecting those worldly hopes and following thee alone because there did not appear anything certain by which I could direct my course."

- "So also, when eternity attracts us from above, and the pleasure of earthly delight pulls us down from below, the soul does not will either the one or the other with all its force, but still it is the same soul that does not will this or that with a united will, and is therefore pulled apart with grievous perplexities, because for truth's sake it prefers this, but for custom's sake it does not lay that aside."

- "And when this power of reason within me also found that it was changeable, it raised itself up to its own intellectual principle, and withdrew its thoughts from experience, abstracting itself from the contradictory throng of fantasies in order to seek for that light in which it was bathed. Then, without any doubting, it cried out that the unchangeable was better than the changeable. *From this it follows that the mind somehow knew the unchangeable, for, unless it had known it in some fashion, it could have had no sure ground for preferring it to the changeable.* And thus with the flash of a trembling glance, it arrived at *that which is*. And I saw thy invisibility [*invisibilia tua*] understood by means of the things that are made. But I was not able to sustain my gaze. My weakness was dashed back, and I lapsed again into my accustomed ways, carrying along with me nothing but a loving memory of my vision, and an appetite for what I had, as it were, smelled the odor of, but was not yet able to eat."

- "Thus the thoughts by which I meditated upon thee were like the efforts of one who would awake, but being overpowered with sleepiness is soon asleep again."

-Augustine's reading of the Bible during his experience- "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof."

- "Are there not many men who, out of a deeper pit of darkness than that of Victorinus, return to thee..."

- "*The storm tosses the voyagers, threatens shipwreck, and everyone turns pale in the presence of death.*"

- "how high art Thou in the highest, and how deep in the deepest! and Thou never departest, and we scarcely (with great difficulty) return to Thee."

- "*Thus did my two wills, one new, and the other old, one carnal, the other spiritual, struggle within me; and by their discord, undid (tore) my soul (apart).*" (divided-self, double-mindedness)

- "...I hesitated to give up the world and serve you because my perception of the truth was uncertain. But still bound to the earth, I refused to be your soldier and was as much afraid of being freed from all entanglements as we ought to fear to be entangled."

- "Thus with the baggage of the world...my musings on you were like the efforts of those who desire to awake...yet a man will usually defer shaking off his drowsiness when there is heavy lethargy in his limbs, *and he is glad to sleep on even when his reason disapproves...*"

- "For the law of sin is the tyranny of habit, by which the mind is drawn and held, even against its will."

- "...I was so tightly held, and from the slavery of worldly business. With increasing anxiety I was going about my usual affairs, and daily sighing to you.

- "...he acted very discreetly, taking care not to become known to those persons who had great reputation in the world. Thus *he avoided all distractions of the mind, and reserved as many hours as possible to pursue or read or listen to discussions about wisdom.*"

- "...a certain cottage where lived some of your servants, some of the '*poor in spirit*' (of such is the kingdom of heaven)."

- "Tell me, I pray thee, what would we attain by all these labors of ours? what aim we at? what serve we for? Can our hopes in court rise higher than to be the Emperor's favorites? and in this, what is there not brittle, and full of perils? and by how many perils arrive we at a greater peril? and when arrive we thither? But a friend of God, if I wish it, I become now at once." So spake he. And in pain with the travail of a new life, he turned his eyes again upon the book, and read on, and was changed inwardly, where Thou sawest, and his mind was stripped of the world, as soon appeared. For as he read, and rolled up and down the waves of his heart, he stormed at himself a while, then discerned, and determined on a better course; and now being Thine, said to his friend, "Now have I broken loose from those our hopes, and am resolved to serve God; and this, from this hour, in this place, I begin upon. If thou likest not to imitate me, oppose not." The other answered, he would cleave to him, to partake so glorious a reward, so glorious a service. Thus both being now Thine, were building the tower at the necessary cost, the forsaking all that they had, and following Thee."

- "...so, with hearts lingering on the earth, went away to the palace. But the other two, fixing their heart on heaven, remained in the cottage. And both had affianced brides, who when they heard hereof, also dedicated their virginity unto God."

- "But now, the more ardently I loved those whose healthful affections I heard of, that they had resigned themselves wholly to Thee to be cured, the more did I abhor myself, when compared with them. For many of my years (some twelve) had now run out with me since my nineteenth, when, upon the reading of Cicero's Hortensius, I was stirred to an earnest love of wisdom; and still I was deferring to reject mere earthly felicity (wisdom), and give myself to search out that, whereof not the finding only, but *the very*



*search, was to be preferred to the treasures and kingdoms of the world, though already found, and to the pleasures of the body, though spread around me at my will."*

*- "And I had thought that I therefore deferred from day to day to reject the hopes of this world, and follow Thee only, because there did not appear aught certain, whither to direct my course."*

*- "Thou saidst that for an uncertain truth thou likest not to cast off the baggage of vanity; now, it is certain, and yet that burden still oppresseth thee, while they who neither have so worn themselves out with seeking it, nor for often years and more have been thinking thereon, have had their shoulders lightened, and received wings to fly away."*

*- "'What ails us?' I exclaim: 'what is it? what heardest thou? The unlearned start up and take heaven by force, and we with our learning, and without heart, to, where we wallow in flesh and blood! Are we ashamed to follow, because others are gone before, and not ashamed not even to follow?'"*

*- "I was mad for health, and dying for life."*

*- "Thus I tore my hair out, struck my forehead, or, entwining my fingers, clasped my knee, these I did because I willed it...Yet I did not do that one thing which seemed to me infinitely more desirable."*

*- "And why should it be? The mind commands the body, and the body obeys. The mind commands itself and is resisted."*

*- "Thus also, when, above, eternity delights us (attracts us from above), and the pleasure of temporal good (earthly delight) holds us down below, it is the same soul which willeth not this or that with an entire will; and therefore is rent asunder with grievous perplexities, while out of truth it sets this first, but out of habit sets not that aside."*

*- "For thou convertedst me unto Thyself, so that I sought neither wife, nor any hope of this world, standing in that rule of faith..."*

## ***The City of God***

*On Socrates "For he saw that the causes of things were sought for by them,--which causes he believed to be ultimately reducible to nothing else than the will of the one true and supreme God,--and on this account he thought they could only be comprehended by a purified mind; and therefore that all diligence ought to be given to the purification of the life by good morals, in order that the mind, delivered from the depressing weight of lusts, might raise itself upward by its native vigor to eternal things, and might, with purified understanding, contemplate that nature which is incorporeal and unchangeable light, where live the causes of all created natures."*

*- "Plato...perhaps entertain an idea of God as to admit that in Him are to be found the cause of existence, the ultimate reason for the understanding, and the end in reference to which the whole life is to be*

regulated.”

- “For if man has been so created as to attain, through that which is most excellent in him, to that which excels all things,—that is, to the one true and absolutely good God, without whom no nature exists, no doctrine instructs, no exercise profits,—let Him be sought in whom all things are secure to us, let Him be discovered in whom all truth becomes certain to us, let Him be loved in whom all becomes right to us.”

- “But that which is capable of more and less is mutable; whence able men, who have thought deeply on these things, have gathered that the first form is not to be found in those things whose form is changeable. Since, therefore, they saw that body and mind might be more or less beautiful in form, and that, if they wanted form, they could have no existence, they saw that there is some existence in which is the first form, unchangeable, and therefore not admitting of degrees of comparison, and in that they most rightly believed was the first principle of things which was not made, and by which all things were made.”

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## 2. Miguel de Molinos

### *Spiritual Guide*

- speaking of the mystical experience, what I would call the Nihilistic experience: *“It hast gotten the name of Hell (Seraphim Rose explained his Nihilism as “Hell” also) amongst mystic Divines, (because it seems impossible to be able to live a moment with so grievous a torment; so that with great reason it may be said, that he that suffers it, lives dying, and dying lives a lingering death).*

-“The way to attain that high state of a Mind reformed, whereby a man immediately gets to the greatest Good, to our first Original, and to the highest Peace, is his Nothingness: Endeavour, O Soul, to be always buried in that misery. *This Nothing, and this acknowledged Misery, is the means by which the Lord works wonders in thy Soul. Cloath thy self with this Nothing, and with this Misery, and see that this Misery and this Nothing be thy continual Food and Habitation, even to the casting down thy self low therein; and then I assure thee, that thou being in that manner, the Nothing, the Lord will be the Whole in thy Soul.*”

-“The Soul that would be perfect, begins to mortifie its Passions; and when ‘tis advanced in that Exercise, it denies it self; then with the Divine Aid, it passes to the State of Nothing, where it despises, abhors and plunges it self upon the knowledge that it is nothing, that it can do nothing, and that it is worth nothing, *Knowing that thou art nothing, that thou canst do nothing, and art worth just nothing, thou wilt quietly embrace passive drynesses, thou wilt endure horrible desolations; thou wilt undergo spiritual martyrdoms and inward*

torments. *By means of this Nothing thou must die in thy self, many ways, at all times, and all hours, Keeping thy self in Nothing, thou wilt bar the door against every thing that is not God*".

- "If from the Chaos of Nothing, his Omnipotence has produced so many wonders (the Universal concepts that flow out of the Nothingness, the Nihilistic experience: non-movement/pacifism, Earthly renunciation, God as the final end, contemplation of God, a 'perfect' realm, our purpose, value, and meaning (Other not Earthly) what will he do in thy Soul, created after his own Image and Likeness, if thou keepest constant quiet, and resigned, with a true knowledge of thy Nothing? Happy Soul, which, even when 'ti disturbed, afflicted and disconsolated, keeps steady there within, without going forth to declare exterior Comfort."

- "Many Souls when they suffer these painful torments, are troubled, afflicted, and disquieted, it seeming to them, that they begin already in this life to suffer eternal punishments; and if by misfortune they go to an unexperienced Confessor, instead of comforting them, he leaves them in greater confusion and perplexities."

- "That thou mayest not lose internal peace, it is necessary thou believe, that it is the goodness of divine mercy, when thus it humbles, afflicts and trys thee; since by that means thy Soul comes to have a deep knowledge of itself, reckoning it self the worst, most impious and abominable of all Souls living, and hence with humility and lowliness it abhors it self."

- "God loves not him who does most, who hears most, nor who shows greatest affection, but who suffers most, if he pray with faith and reverence, believing that he is in the divine presence..."

- *"But the happy Soul which is gotten to this holy hatred of it self, lives overwhelmed, drowned and swallowed up in the depth of its own Nothing."*

- So in the Beginning, when God intends after an extraordinary manner, to guide the Soul into the School of the divine and loving Notices of the internal Law, he makes it go with Darkness, and Dryness, that he may bring it near to himself, because the Divine Majesty knows very well, that it is not by the means of ones one Ratiocination, or Industry, that a Soul draws near to him, and understands the Divine Documents; but rather by silent and humble Resignation."

- "The Senses are not capable of divine Blessings; hence if thou would be Happy and Wise; be Silent and Believe; Suffer and have Patience; be Confident and Walk on; it concerns thee far more to hold thy Peace, and to let thy self be guided by the hand of God, than to enjoy all the Goods of this World. And though it seem to thee, that thou does nothing at all, and art idle being so Dumb and Resigned; yet it is of infinite fruit."

- "St. Bonaventure, teaches us not to form Conceptions of any thing, no not of God, because it is Imperfection to make Representations, Images, and Ideas, how subtle or ingenious soever, either of the Will, or of the Goodness, Trinity, and Unity; nay, of the Divine Presence it self..."
  
- "Thou'lt find a loathing of the things of the World, which by little and little tends to the stifling of the bad desires of thy past Life, and the production of other new ones of serving God."
  
- "Think not that when thou art dry and darksome in the presence of God, with faith and silence, that thou do'st nothing, that thou lovest time, and that thou are idle, because not to wait on God, according to the saying of St. Bernard (Tom.5.in Fract. de vit. solit.c.8.p. 90.), is the greatest idleness..."
  
- "It concerns thee only then, to prepare thine heart, like clean paper, wherein the divine wisdom may imprint characters to his own liking. O how great a work will it be for thy Soul to be whole hours together in Prayer, dumb, resigned, and humble, without acting, knowing, or desiring to understand any thing."
  
- "Know, however, that thou art to be plunged in a bitter sea of sorrows, and of internal and external pains, which torment will pierce into the most inward part of thy Soul and Body."
  
- "The invisible enemies will pursue thee with scruples, lascivious suggestions, and unclean thoughts, with incentives to impatience, pride, rage, cursing and blaspheming the Name of God, his Sacraments, and holy Mysteries. Thou'lt find a great lukewarmness, loathing, and wearisomness for the things of God; and obscurity and darkness in thy understanding; a faintness, Confusion and narrowness of heart; such a coldness and feebleness of the will to resist, that a straw will appear to thee a beam. Thy desertion will be so great, that thou'lt think there is no more a God for thee, and that thou are rendered incapable of entertaining a good desire: so that thou'lt continue shut up betwixt two walls, in constant streights and anguish, without any hopes of ever getting out of so dreadful an oppression."
  
- "But fear not: all this is necessary for purging thy Soul, and making it know its own misery, and sensibly perceive the annihilation of all the passions, and disordinate appetites, wherewith it rejoyced it self."
  
- "Our own nature is so base, proud and ambitious, and so full of its own appetites, its own judgements and opinions, that if temptations restrained it not, it would be undone without remedy. The Lord then seeing our Misery and perverse inclination, and thereby moved to compassion, suffers us to be assaulted by divers thoughts against the Faith, horrible temptations, and by violent and painful suggestions of impatience, pride, gluttony, luxury, rage, blasphemy, cursing, despair, and an infinite number of others, to the end we may know our selves and be humble. With these horrible temptations, that infinite goodness humbles our pride, giving us in them the most wholesome medicine."
  
- "All our righteousness (as Isaiah saith) are as filthy rags, (Chap. 64. 6.) through the stains of vanity, conceitedness, and self-love. It is necessary they be purified with the fire of tribulation and temptation, that so they may be clean, pure, perfect and agreeable to the eyes of God."

- "Many Souls when they suffer these painful torments, are troubled, afflicted, and disquieted, it seeming to them, that they begin already in this life to suffer eternal punishments; and if by misfortune they go to an unexperienced Confessor, instead of comforting them, he leaves them in greater confusion and perplexities."

- "That thou mayest not lose internal peace, it is necessary thou believe, that it is the goodness of divine mercy, when thus it humbles, afflicts and tries thee; since by that means thy Soul comes to have a deep knowledge of itself, reckoning it self the worst, most impious and abominable of all Souls living, and hence with humility and lowliness it abhors it self."

- "Internal Recollection is Faith, and Silence in the Presence of God."

- "Here thou art to shut up the Senses, trusting God with all the care of thy Welfare, and minding nothing of the affairs this Life."

- "No sooner wilt thou have given thy self up to thy Lord in this inward Way, but all Hell will conspire against thee, seeing one single Soul inwardly retired to its own Presence, makes greater War against the Enemy, than a thousand others that walk externally; because the Devil makes an infinite advantage of an internal Soul."

- Chapter Nine (68, 69, 70 etc.)- *"In the time of the recollection, Peace and Resignation of thy Soul, God will more esteem the various impertinent, troublesome and ugly thoughts that thou hast, than the good purposes, and high sentiments. Know that the effort, which thou thy self mayest make to resist Thoughts, is an impediment, and will leave thy Soul in greater anxieties. The best thing that is to be done, is sweetly to dispise them, to know thine own wretchedness, and peacefully make an Offering to God of the Trouble. Though thou canst not get rid of the anguish of Thoughts, hast no Light, Comfort, nor spiritual Sentiment: Yet be not afflicted, neither leave off recollection, because they are the Snares of the Enemy: Resign thy self at the time with Vigour, endure with Patience, and persevere in his Presence; for whilst thou perseverest after that manner, thy Soul will be internally improved. Dost thou believe that when thou comest away from Prayer dry, in the same manner as thou began it; that that was because of want of Preparation, and that hath done thee no good: That is a Fallacy: Because the fruit of true Prayer consists not in enjoying the Light, nor in having Knowledge of spiritual things, since these may be found in a speculative Intellect, without true Virtue and Perfection; it only consists in enduring with Patience, and persevering in Faith and Silence, believing that thou art in the Lord's Presence, turning to him thy Heart with tranquillity, and purity of Mind. So whilst thou perseverest in this manner, thou'lt have the only Preparation and disposition which at that time is necessary, and shalt reap infinite fruit. Nature her self, apparently, will torment thee, she being always an Enemy to the Spirit, which in depriving her of sensible Pleasures, remains Weak, Melancholy, and full of Irksomeness, so that it feels a Hell in all Spiritual Exercises, particularly in that of Prayer, hence it grows extremely impatient to be at an end of it, through the uneasiness of Thoughts, the lassitude of Body, importunate Sleep, and the not being able to curb the Senses, every one of which would for its own share, follow its own Pleasure. Happy art thou if thou canst persevere amidst this Martyrdom! These are called drynesses in Spirituals, but are very profitable, if they be embraced and suffered with Patience. Who so shall accustom himself to suffer them without repining, will from that labour draw*

*vast advantage. It is certain, that in recollection the Devil frequently charges the Soul more fiercely with a Battalion of Thoughts, to discomfit the quiet of the Soul, and alienate it from that most sweet and secure internal Conversation, raising horrors, to the end it may leave it off, reducing it most commonly to such a state, as if it were lead forth to a most rigorous Torment."*

- "How many have begun this happy practice of Prayer, and Internal Recollection, and have left it off, pretending that they feel no pleasure, that they lose time, that their thoughts trouble them, and that that Prayer is not for them, whilst they find not any sentiment of God, nor any ability to reason or discourse; whereas they might have believed, been silent, and had patience. All this is no more, but with ingratitude to hunt after sensible pleasures, suffering themselves to be transported with self-love, seeking themselves, and not God, because they cannot suffer a little pain and dryness, without reflecting on the infinite loss they sustain, whereas by the least act of reverence towards God, amidst dryness and sterility, they receive an eternal reward."

- "The Lord told the venerable Mother Francesca Lopez of Valenza, and a religious of the third Order of St. Francis, three things of great light and consequence in order to internal recollection. In the first place, that a quarter of an hour of Prayer, with recollection of the senses and faculties, and with resignation and humility, does more good to the Soul than five days of penitential exercises, hair cloaths, disciplines, fastings, and sleeping on bare boards, *because these are only mortifications of the body*, and with recollection the Soul is purified."

- *"83. The more the Soul rejoices in sensible love, the less delight God has in it; on the contrary, the less the Soul rejoices in this sensible love, the more God delights in it.*

- "I'll conclude this Chapter by undeceiving thee of the vulgar error of those who say, that in<sup>7</sup> this internal Recollection, or Prayer of Rest, the faculties operate not, and that the Soul is idle and wholly unactive. This is a manifest fallacy of those who have little experience, because although it operate not by means of the memory, nor by the second operation of the Intellect, which is the judgment, nor by the third, which is discourse or ratiocination, yet it operates by the first and chief operation of the intellect, which is simple apprehension, enlightened by holy Faith, and aided by the divine gifts of the holy Spirit."

- "How happy and how well applied will thy Soul be, if retreating within it self, it there shrink into its own nothing, both in its Center and superior Part, without minding what it does; whether it recollect or not, whether it walk well or ill; if it operate or not, without heeding, thinking, or minding any sensible thing?"

- "O how few are the Souls, that attain to this perfect way of Praying, because they penetrate not enough into this internal recollection, and Mystical Silence, and because they strip not themselves of imperfect reflection, and sensible pleasure!"

- "though it seem to thee, that thou art diverted from it, by attending the daily occupations of thy Vocation, as Studying, Reading, Preaching, Eating, Drinking, doing Business, and the like; thou art mistaken; for the one destroys not the other, nor by so doing doest thou neglect to do the Will of God, nor

to proceed in virtual Prayer, as St. Thomas says. 108. Because these occupations are not contrary to his Will, nor contrary to thy Resignation, it being certain, that God would have thee to Eat, Study, take Pains, do Business, &c. So that to perform these Exercises, which are conformed to his Will and Pleasure, thou departest not out of his Presence, nor from thine own Resignation."

- "By not speaking, not desiring, and not thinking, one arrives at the true and perfect Mystical Silence, wherein God speaks with the Soul, communicates himself to it, and in the Abyss of its own Depth, teaches it the most perfect and exalted Wisdom." (me- a quote that Underhill uses as well)

- "It is not enough for gaining this Treasure, to forsake the World, nor to renounce thine own Desires, and all things created; if thou wean not thy self from all Desires and Thoughts. Rest in this mystical Silence, and open the Door, that so God may communicate himself unto thee, unite with thee, and transform thee into himself."

- End of Book One: "O Incarnate Seraphim, and Dei-fied Man! How well did'st thou know how to dive into that internal and mystical Silence, and to distinguish betwixt the outward and inward Man?"

- Book two: "This uses sometime to put on a garb of a disordinate Desire, of a vain complacency, of an industrious affection and proper esteem; all Enemies to the peace of the Soul. 15. It is never good to love thy Neighbour to the detriment of thine own spiritual good. To please God in purity, ought to be the only scope of thy Works; this ought to be thy only desire and thought..."

- "St. Paul (I Tim. 4.) recommended to us first the care of our own Souls, before that of our Neighbour. Take heed unto thy self, and unto thy Doctrine...continue in thy rest, disengaged, and wholly resigned up to the Divine will and pleasure. Don't think that in that condition thou art idle: He is busied enough, who is always ready waiting to perform the Will of God. Who takes heed to himself for God's sake, does every thing; because, one pure Act of internal Resignation, is more worth than a hundred thousand Exercises for ones own Will."

- "Howsoever evident it may be to thee, that thy Soul is endowed with internal light and experience; the best thing still that thou canst do, is to keep quiet and resigned in thine own nothingness, until God call thee for the Good of Souls..."

- "how must it be without internal light? without due experience, which are gifts not communicated to all Souls; but to abstracted and resigned Souls, and to such as have advanced to perfect annihilation, by the way of terrible tribulation, and passive purgation. Be perswaded, O blessed Soul, that all works, which in this profession are not governed by a true zeal, springing from pure love, and a purged Soul, cloath the Soul with vanity, self-love, and spiritual pride."

- "O how many self confident men by their own judgment and opinion, undertake this Ministry; and instead of pleasing God, emptying and abstracting their own Souls, (though they may do some good to their Neighbour) are filled with Earth, Straw, and Self-conceit! Be quiet and Resigned, renounce thy own Judgment and Desire, sink down

*into the Abyss of thy own Insufficiency and Nothingness; for there only thou'lt find God, the true Light, thy Happiness, and greatest Perfection."*

- "For Confession, there are some good; but for the Government of Spirits by the mystical Way, there are so few (says Father John Davila) that in a thousand, you shall possibly find one: St. Francis of Sales says, One among ten thousand: And the illuminated Thauler says, That in a hundred thousand, it was a hard thing to find one expert Master of Spirit. The reason is, because there are so few who dispose themselves to receive the mystical Science..."

- *"The spiritual Director, which lives disinterested, longs more for the internal Solitude than the Employment of Souls: and if any spiritual Master is displeased when a Soul goes from him, and leaves him for another Guide, tis a clear sign, that he did not live disinterested, nor sought purely the Glory of God, but his own proper Esteem."*

- *"It is of so great Efficacy, that it rejects worldly Honour, Self-conceit, Spiritual Ambition, the desire of Fame, a wish to be Great, a presumption of being the only Man, and thinking that he knows all things; it bids adieu to Friends, Friendship, Visits, Letters of Complement, Commerce of the Creature, Interest with Spiritual Children, Mastership, and Business; it turns away too much inclination to Confessor-ship, the Affection that is disorder'd in the Government of Souls, that makes a man think he is fitting for it; it moves Self-love, Authority, Presumption, treating of Profit, making a shew of the Letters which a man writes, shewing those writ by his Spiritual children, to make known what a great Workman he is..." (Ha!)*

- "You ought to know that many Souls there are that deprive themselves of the infinite benefit of this precious Food, by judging that they are not sufficiently prepared, and that no less than an Angelical Purity is necessary for it. if thou hast a pure end, a true desire of doing the Will of God, without looking at sensible Devotion, or thine own Satisfaction, come with confidence, because thou art well disposed."

- "The second Preparation in order to the interiour and spiritual Souls, must be to endeavor to live with greater Purity and Self-denial, with an universal taking ones self off from the World, with an inward Mortification and continual Retirement..."

- "If thou drawest near with humility, with a desire of doing the Divine Will, and with the leave of thy Confessor, thou mayst receive it every day, and every day thou wilt grow better and better" (me- this entire project may be a guide on how to think going into a trip, and the after effects of such a trip or experience)

- "Tis true, O Lord, that thou entrest into me a miserable creature, but true also it is, that thou at the same time remainest in thy glory and brightness, and in thy self...thou livest in the midst of thy brightness and magnificence, *tho' thou art in my darkness and misery."*

- "how, O Lord, can a miserable creature receive an infinite Majesty? humble thy self, O my soul, *to the very depth of nothing*, confess thy unworthiness, look upon thy misery, and acknowledge the wonders of the



Divine Love, which suffers it self to be mean in this incomprehensible Mystery, that it may be communicated and united with thee."

- "O Sovereign Lord, keep back my heart strongly, that it may never more return to its imperfect liberty, but *all annihilated may die to the world, and remain united with thee.*"

- "*Many have fallen into this Precipice, for want of subjecting their judgment to their spiritual Fathers; whilst they have imagined, that unless they give themselves up to rigid Penances, they never can be Saints, as if sanctity did only consist in them. They say, that he that sows little, reaps little; but they sow no other seed, with their indiscreet Penances, than Self-love, instead of rooting it up. 112. But the worst of these indiscreet Penances, is, that by the use of these dry and barren Severities, is begotten and naturalized a certain bitterness of heart towards themselves and their neighbours, which is a great stranger to the true Spirit: towards themselves, because they do not feel the sweetness of Christ's Yoke, the sweetness of Charity, but only the asperity of Penances; whereby their nature becomes imbitter'd; and hence it follows, that such men become exasperated with their Neighbours, to the marking and reproving much their faults, and holding of them for very defective, for the same reason that they see em go a less rigorous way than themselves: hence they grow proud with their exercises of Penance, seeing few that do after em, and thinking themselves better than other folks, whereupon they much fall in the account of their Vertues.*" (Kempis, this is my issue)

- "When the Soul begins to retire from the World and Vice, it ought to tame the body with rigour, that it may be subject to the Spirit and follow the Law of God with ease; then it concerns you to manage the Weapons of Haircloth, Fasting and Discipline, to take from the flesh the roots of sin; but *when the Soul enters into the way of the Spirit, imbracing internal mortification, corporal chastisements ought to be relaxed, because there is trouble enough in the Spirit: the heart is weakned, the breast suffers, the brain is weary, the whole Body grieved and disabled for the functions of the Soul.*" (great, the way I want to live on both extremes)

Book Three- "they exercise themselves in a loving fear of God, and contempt of themselves, but with a true Hope in God, and Dis-confidence in themselves. The more they are humbled with true contempt and knowledge of themselves, the more they please God, and arrive at a singular respect and veneration in his Presence."

- "*Their continual Exercise is, to enter into themselves, in God, with quiet and silence; because there is his Center, Habitation and Delight. They make a greater account of this interiour Retirement, than of speaking of God; they retire into that interiour and secret Center of the Soul, to know God and receive his Divine Influence, with fear and loving reverence; if they go out, they go out only to know and despise themselves. 10. But know that few are the Souls which arrive at this happy State; because few there are that are willing to embrace contempt, and suffer themselves to be Refined and Purified; upon which account, although there are many that enter into this interiour Way, yet tis a rare thing for a Soul to go on, and not stick upon the entrance. The Lord said to a Soul, "This inward Way is tread by few; tis so high a Grace, that none deserves it; few walk in it, because tis no other than a Death of the senses; and few there be that are willing so to Die and be Annihilated; in which disposition this so sovereign a Gift is founded."*

- *"12. It is the saying of S. Bernard, That to serve God, is nothing else but to do Good and suffer Evil. He that would go to Perfection by the means of sweetness and consolation, is mistaken: You must desire no other Consolation from God, than to end your Life for his sake, in the state of true Obedience and Subjection. Christ our Lord's way was not that of Sweetness and Softness, nor did he invite us to any such, either by his words or Example, when he said, --He that will come after me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his Cross and follow me, (St. Matth. 24. 26.) The Soul that would be United to Christ, must be conformable to him, following him in the way of suffering."*

- *"15. O what a great Happiness is it for a Soul to be subdued and subject! what great Riches is it to be Poor! what a mighty honour to be despised! what a height is it to be beaten down! what a comfort is it to be afflicted! what a credit of knowledge is it to be reputed Ignorant! and finally, what a Happiness of Happinesses is it to be Crucified with Christ!"*

- *"All the Knowledge and Union with God , arises from suffering, which is the truest proof of love."*

- *"O blessed Soul, if thou knowest how to be constant and quiet in the Fire of Tribulation, and would'st but let thy self be washed with the bitter Waters of Affliction, how quickly would'st thou find thy self rich in heavenly Gifts..."*

- *"Thou wilt find within thy self a passive dryness, darkness, anguish, contradictions, continual resistance, inward desertions, horrible desolations, continual and strong suggestions, and vehement temptations of the Enemy; finally, thou wilt see thy self so afflicted, that thou wilt not be able to lift up thy Heart, being full of sorrow and heaviness, nor do the least act of Faith, Hope or Charity. 31. Here thou wilt see thy self forlorn and subject to Passions of impatience, anger, rage, swearing, and disordered appetites, seeming to thy self the most miserable Creature, the greatest Sinner in the World, the most abhorred of God, deprived and stript of all Vertue, with a pain like that of Hell, seeing thy self afflicted and desolate, to think that thou hast altogether lost God."*

- *"...surrounded by temptations, darkness, anguish, affliction, sorrows and rigid drowths, doth taste of Death every moment in its painful Torment and tremendous Desolation, without feeling the least comfort, with an affliction so great, that the pain of it seems nothing else but a Death prolonged, and a continual Martyrdom..."* (I feel this way now. The deep, seemingly unending experience of despair, where not one thing brings you joy. Not a single thing. Surrounded by a nightmare)

- *"If from the Chaos of Nothing, his Omnipotence has produced so many wonders, what will he do in thy Soul, created after his own Image and Likeness, if thou keepest constant quiet, and resigned, with a true knowledge of thy Nothing?"*

- *"...all the good consists in being silent, suffering and, holding patience with rest and resignation."*

- *"Thy good luck consists not in injoying, but in suffering with quiet and resignation. St. Teresa appeared after her death to a certain Soul, and told it, that she had only been rewarded for her pain; but had not received one dram of reward for so many Extasies and Revelations and Comforts that she had here enjoyed in this World."*

- "Although this painful martyrdom of horrible desolation and passive purgation be so tremendous, that with reason *it has gotten the name of Hell amongst mystick Divines*, (because it *seems impossible to be able to live a moment with so grievous a torment*; so that with great reason it may be said, that he that suffers it, lives dying, and dying lives a lingring death) yet know, that it is necessary to endure it, to arrive at the sweet, joyous and abundant riches of high contemplation and loving union: and there has been no holy Soul, which has not passed through this spiritual martyrdom and painful torment."

- "Know that pure, perfect and essential Love consists in the Cross, in self-denial and resignation, in perfect humility, in poverty of spirit, and in a mean opinion of thy self."

- "Many there be, who, however they have been dedicated to Prayer, yet have no relish of God; because in the end of their Prayers, they are neither mortified nor attend upon God any longer..."

- "To the simple and the mortified, the recreation of the senses is a sort of death: they never go to it, unless compelled by necessity and edification of their neighbours."

- "*There must be tribulation to make a man's life acceptable to God.*"

- "When God crucifies in the inmost part of the Soul, no creature is able to comfort it..."

- "Those Souls are to be pitied, who cannot find in their hearts to believe, that Tribulation and Suffering is their greatest Blessing. They who are perfect ought always to be desirous of dying and suffering, being always in a state of death and suffering: vain is the man who doth not suffer..."

- "Undeceive thy self, and believe, that in order to thy Soul's being totally transformed with God, it is necessary for it to be lost and be denied in its life, sense, knowledge, and power; and to die living, and not living; dying, and not dying; suffering, and not suffering; resigning up, and not resigning up it self, without reflecting upon any thing. Perfection, in its followers, receives not its glories but by Fire and Martyrdom, Grievs, Torments, Punishments and Contempt, suffered and endured with gallantry and courage."

- "Great is the difference which is between doing, suffering, and dying; doing is delightful and belongs to beginners; suffering, with desire, belongs to those who are proficient; dying always in themselves, belongs to those who are accomplished and perfect; of which number there are very few in the world. How happy wilt thou be, if thou hast no other thought, but to die in thy self!"

- "If the Soul should not fall into some faults, it would never come to understand its own misery, though it hears men speak and reads spiritual Books; nor can it ever obtain precious peace, if it do not first know its own miserable weakness: because there the remedy is difficult, where there is no clear knowledge of the defect. God will suffer in thee sometimes one fault, sometimes another, that by this knowledge of thy self, seeing thee so often fallen, thou may'st believe that thou art a meer nothing..." (me- Kierkegaard says this

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### 3. Tolstoy

- *"There was, he said, one infallible rule, and that was to have no care about the worldly life."*

#### *Confession*

- "I speak of men of our class, of men who are true to themselves, and not of those who make of religion a means of obtaining some temporal advantage. *(These men are truly absolute unbelievers, for if faith be to them a means of obtaining any worldly end, it is most certainly no faith at all.)*

- "He said that a man who lives according to his doctrine must be ready at any moment to endure violence from others, and, possibly, to die of hunger and cold. The doctrine of Jesus, which teaches us that we cannot possibly make life secure, but that we must be ready to die at any moment, is unquestionably preferable to the doctrine of the world, which obliges us to struggle for the security of existence. It is preferable because the impossibility of escaping death, and the impossibility of making life secure, is the same for the disciples of Jesus as it is for the disciples of the world; but, according to the doctrine of Jesus, life itself is not absorbed in the idle attempt to make existence secure." (Tillich, Spong)

- "It might seem frightful to any one who does not realize the nothingness and absurdity of an isolated personal life, and who believes that he will never die. But I know that my life, considered in relation to my individual happiness, is, taken by itself, a stupendous farce, and that this meaningless existence will end in a stupid death." (Vivekananda)

- "Seek among all these men, from beggar to millionaire, one who is contented with his lot, and you will not find one such in a thousand."

- "When such an instance does occur, it is not inspired by a desire to make life more simple, but to amass money and make it more sure. Each strives continually to make the heavy burden of existence still more heavy, by giving himself up body and soul to the practice of *the doctrine of the world*. To-day we must buy an overcoat and galoches, to-morrow, a watch and chain; the next day we must install ourselves in an

apartment with a sofa and a bronze lamp; then we must have carpets and velvet gowns; then a house, horses and carriages, paintings and decorations, and then—then we fall ill of overwork and die.”

*–“The infinite depth repels and horrifies me; the infinite height attracts and satisfies me.”*

–“I speak of men of our class, of men who are true to themselves, and not of those who make of religion a means of obtaining some temporal advantage. (These men are truly absolute unbelievers, for if faith be to them a means of obtaining any worldly end, it is most certainly no faith at all.)”

–“Every time I tried to express the longings of my heart for a truly virtuous life, I was met with contempt and derisive laughter; but directly I gave way to the lowest of my passions, I was praised and encouraged. I found ambition, love of power, love of gain, lechery, pride, anger, vengeance, held in high esteem. I gave way to these passions, and becoming like unto my elders, I felt that the place which I filled in the world satisfied those around me.”

–“Quite unconscious that we ourselves knew nothing, that to the simplest of all problems in life what is right, and what is wrong we had no answer, we all went on talking together without one to listen, at times abetting and praising one another on condition that we were abetted and praised in turn, and again turning upon each other in wrath in short, we reproduced the scenes in a madhouse.”

–“It is now clear to me that between ourselves and the inhabitants of a madhouse there was no difference; at the time I only vaguely suspected this, and, like all madmen, thought all were mad except myself.”

– “The new circumstances of a happy family life by which I was now surrounded completely led my mind away from the search after the meaning of life as a whole. My life was concentrated in my family, my wife, and children, and consequently in the care for increasing the means of supporting them.”

*– “The questions seemed so foolish, so simple, so childish; but no sooner had I begun my attempt to decide them than I was convinced that they were neither childish nor silly, but were concerned with the deepest problems of life, and again that I was, think of them as I would, utterly unable to find an answer to them.”*

*– “Till I know the reasons for my own acts, I can do nothing, I cannot live.”*

– “My life had come to a sudden stop. I was able to breathe, to eat, to drink, to sleep. I could not, indeed, help doing so; but there was no real life in me. I had not a single wish to strive for the fulfillment of what I could feel to be reasonable. *If I wished for anything, I knew beforehand that, were I to satisfy the wish, nothing would come of it; I should still be dissatisfied. Had a fairy appeared and offered me all I desired, I should not have known what to say. If I seemed to have, at a given moment of excitement, not a wish, but a mood resulting from the tendencies of former wishes, at a calmer moment I knew that it was a delusion, that I really wished for nothing.*”

–“The truth lay in this that life had no meaning for me. Every day of life, every step in it, brought me nearer the edge of a precipice, whence I saw clearly the final ruin before me. To stop, to go back, were alike

impossible; nor could I shut my eyes so as not to see the suffering that alone awaited me, the death of all in me, even to annihilation. *Thus I, a healthy and a happy man, was brought to feel that I could live no longer, that an irresistible force was dragging me down into the grave.*"

- "...I hid away a cord, to avoid being tempted to hang myself by it to one of the pegs between the cupboards of my study, where I undressed alone every evening, and ceased carrying a gun because it offered too easy a way of getting rid of life. I knew not what I wanted; I was afraid of life; I shrank from it, and yet there was something I hoped far from it."

- *"standing like a fool with but one thing clear to me that there was nothing in life, that there never was anything, and never will be."*

- *"I was only astonished that this had not occurred to me before, from premises which had so long been known. Illness and death would come (indeed they had come), if not to-day, then to-morrow, to those whom I loved, to myself, and nothing would remain but stench and worms. All my acts, whatever I did, would sooner or later be forgotten, and I myself be nowhere. Why, then, busy one's self with anything? How could men see this and live? It is possible to live only as long as life intoxicates us; as soon as we are sober again we see that it is all a delusion, and a stupid one! In this, indeed, there is nothing either ludicrous or amusing; it is only cruel and absurd."*

- *"no longer taste sweet to me. "My family," thought I; " but a family, a wife and children, are also human beings, and subject to the same conditions as myself; they must either be living in a lie, or they must see the terrible truth. Why should they live? Why should I love, care for, bring up, and watch over them? To bring them to the despair which fills myself, or to make dolts of them? As I love them, I cannot conceal from them the truth every step they take in knowledge leads them to it, and that truth is death."*

- *"I could no longer take comfort from what I saw in the mirror that my position was a stupid and desperate one."*

- *"...I was like a man lost in a wood, and who, terrified by the thought, rushes about trying to find a way out, and, though he knows each step can only lead him farther astray, cannot help running backwards and forwards."* (not a 'Stoic' attitude, nor a Vivekananda attitude, necessarily, but rather an embrace of the inevitable)

- *"If we turn to those branches of knowledge in which men have tried to find a solution to the problem of life, to physiology, psychology, biology, sociology, we meet with a striking poverty of thought, with the greatest obscurity, with an utterly unjustifiable pretension to decide questions beyond their competence, and a constant contradiction of one thinker by another, and even by himself. If we turn to the branches of knowledge which are not concerned with the problem of life, but find an answer to their own particular scientific questions, we are lost in admiration of man's mental powers; but we know beforehand that we shall get no answer to our questions about life itself, for these branches of knowledge directly ignore all questions concerning it. Those who profess them say, "We cannot tell you what you are and why you live; such questions we do not study. But if you wish to know the laws of light, of chemical affinities, of the development of organisms; if you wish to know the laws that govern different bodies, their form, and relations to number and size; if you*

wish to know the laws of your own mind, we can give you clear, exact, and absolutely certain answers on every point." (it really comes down to Mckenna's question of 'what is going on here?' and that 'no one knows what's going on here', Vivekananda said this first I just need to find where he said it)

- *"I would strive to evolve a theory which should enable me to look upon my fancies as a law belonging to humanity. As soon, however, as the question of the meaning of life made itself clearly felt within me, my theoretical answer was for ever confuted."* (the finite/infinite distinction)

- It is no fable, but a living, undeniable truth, to be understood of all men. The former delusion of happiness in life which hid from me the horror of the dragon no longer deceives me."

- "...I cannot conceal from them the truth every step they take in knowledge leads them to it, and that truth is death."

- "all those who had searched like myself had failed also, and come like me to the despairing conviction that the only absolute knowledge man can possess is this that life is without a meaning."

- ""What is the meaning of my life? It has none. Or what will come of my life? Nothing. Or why does all that is exist, and why do I exist? Because it does exist."

- ""You are an accidentally combined lump of something."" (Ha! These last two quotes are so funny)

- "wherever the philosopher does not overlook the great question of all, the answer is always the same the answer given by Socrates, Schopenhauer, Solomon, and Buddha."

- ""We approach truth only in the proportion as we are farther from life," says Socrates, when preparing to die."

- *"What do we who love truth seek in life? In order to be free from the body and all the ills that accompany life in it. If so, then, how shall we not be glad of the approach of death? A wise man seeks death all his life, and death has no terrors for him...The only thing that remains to us is nothing."*

- "the whole of this material universe of ours, with all its suns and its milky-ways is nothing."

- ""The life of the body is evil and a lie, and so the annihilation of that life is a good for which we ought to wish," says Socrates.

- "Life is what it ought not to be; "an evil, and a passage from it into nothingness is the only good in life," says Schopenhauer. Everything in the world, both folly and wisdom, both riches and poverty, rejoicing and grief, all is vanity and worthless. Man dies and nothing is left of him, and this again is vanity, says Solomon. "To live, knowing that sufferings, illness, old age, and death are inevitable, is not possible; we must get rid of life, get rid of the possibility of living," says Buddha."

- "I had come was not the result of my going astray, of any mental disorder, but, on the contrary, of my thinking rightly, of my being in agreement with the conclusions of the most powerful intellects among mankind."
  
- "I could not be deceived. All was vanity. A misfortune to be born. Death was better than life, and life's burden must be got rid of."
  
- "The dulness of their imagination enables these men to forget what destroyed the peace of *Buddha, the inevitable sickness, old age, and death, which, if not to-day, then to-morrow, must be the end of all their pleasures.*"
  
- "to accept life as described by Solomon and Schopenhauer, to know that it is a stupid and ridiculous joke, and yet live on, to wash, dress, dine, talk, and even write books. This position was painful and disgusting to me, but I remained in it."
  
- "I now see that I did not kill myself because I had, in a confused sort of way, an inkling that my ideas were wrong."  
(The experience of Nihilism is real. The only confusion would stem from a denial to accept the Nothingness of everything)
  
- "Why do all men live, when all men are able to die? Is it that I and Schopenhauer alone are wise enough to have understood the unmeaning emptiness and evil of life?"
  
- "I understood that the truth had been hidden from me, not so much because I had erred in my reasoning, as because I had led the exceptional life of an epicure bent on satisfying the lusts of the flesh."
  
- "To live after God's Word, he must renounce all the pleasures of life, labour, be humble, endure, and be charitable to all men."
  
- "Then I understood it all. I am in search of faith, the staff and strength of life, while these men seek the best means of fulfilling in the sight of men certain human obligations, and having to deal with earthly affairs they fulfill them as ordinary men ever do."
  
- "All my reasoning could not induce me to act in accordance with my convictions i.e., to kill myself. I should not speak the truth, if I said that my *reason alone brought me to the position in which I was*. Reason had been at work, no doubt, but something else had worked too, something which I can only call an instinctive consciousness of life." (recollection, inward, God, Nothingness, reason leads to Nothingness which is God, there is no 'faith' in the sense of believing without evidence, there is faith which is the embracing of the terrifying mystery of existence)
  
- "When I watched the restricted circle of those who were my equals in social position, I saw only people who did not understand the question, people who kept down their understanding of it by the excitement of life, people who understood it and put an end to life, and people who, understanding, lived on through weakness, in despair. And I saw no others."



- "The answers given by science to the question were all 'Identity.'" (Vivekananda says he would rather kill himself than give up the metaphysics that lies as the ground behind scientific discoveries)

- "How dieth the wise man? As the fool."

- "If a man lives, he believes in something. If he did not believe that there was something to live for, he would not live. *If he does not see and understand the unreality of the finite, he believes in the finite; if he sees that unreality, he must believe in the infinite. Without faith there is no life. I then went back upon all the past stages of my mental state, and was terrified. It was now clear to me that for anyone to live it was necessary for him either to be ignorant of infinity or to accept an explanation of the meaning of life which should equalise the finite and the infinite.* Such an explanation I had, but I had no need of it while I believed in the finite, and I began to apply to my explanation the tests of reason, and in the light of the latter all former explanations were shown to be worthless."

- "(1) that the position assumed by Schopenhauer, Solomon, and myself, with all our wisdom, was a foolish one: we understand that life is an evil, and yet we live. This clearly is foolish, because if life is foolish, and I care so much for reason, life should be put an end to, and then there would be no one to deny it." (this is important to the 'turning point' of Tolstoy 'leaving' renunciation behind, even after all the despair, meaninglessness, Nihilism, etc. It was too much for him, fair enough. It seems a spiritually induced suicide is the logical conclusion of the Nihilistic experience)

## ***A Letter to a Hindu***

- "Free your minds from those overgrown, mountainous imbecilities which hinder your recognition of it, and at once the truth will emerge from amid the pseudo-religious nonsense that has been smothering it: the indubitable, eternal truth inherent in man, which is one and the same in all the great religions of the world."

## ***My Religion***

- "These chapters I read very often, each time with the same emotional ardor, as I came to the verses which exhort the hearer to turn the other cheek, to give up his cloak, to be at peace with all the world, to love his enemies,—but each time with the same disappointment. The divine words were not clear. They exhorted to a renunciation so absolute as to entirely stifle life as I understood it; to renounce everything, therefore, could not, it seemed to me, be essential to salvation."

- "I saw that Jesus did not exhort us to turn the other cheek that we might endure suffering, but that his exhortation was, "Resist not evil," and that he afterward declared suffering to be the possible consequence of the practice of this maxim."

- "In the Sermon on the Mount, as well as in many other places, Jesus represents his disciples, those who observe the rule of non-resistance to evil, as turning the other cheek, giving up their cloaks, persecuted, used despitefully, and in want. Everywhere Jesus says that he who taketh not up his cross, he who does not renounce worldly advantage, he who is not ready to bear all the consequences of the commandment, "Resist not evil," cannot become his disciple. To his disciples Jesus says, Choose to be poor; bear all things without resistance to evil, even though you thereby bring upon yourself persecution, suffering, and death. Prepared to suffer death rather than resist evil, he reproved the resentment of Peter, and died exhorting his followers not to resist and to remain always faithful to his doctrine. *The early disciples observed this rule, and passed their lives in misery and persecution, without rendering evil for evil.*"

- "The command, "Resist not evil," is the central point of Jesus' doctrine; it is not a mere verbal affirmation; it is a rule whose practice is obligatory. It is verily the key to the whole mystery..." (Nietzsche- AntiChrist)

- "What ought I to do? Again I must choose between the divine law and the human law."

- *"I felt that if I adopted the law of Jesus, I should be alone; I should pass many unhappy hours; I should be persecuted and afflicted as Jesus had said. But if I adopted the human law, everybody would approve; I should be in peace and safety, with all the resources of civilization at my command to put my conscience at ease."*

- "I now understood the words of Jesus: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil." Jesus' meaning is: "You have thought that you were acting in a reasonable manner in defending yourself by violence against evil, in tearing out an eye for an eye, by fighting against evil with criminal tribunals, guardians of the peace, armies; but I say unto you, Renounce violence; have nothing to do with violence; do harm to no one, not even to your enemy."

- *"Believers profess that Christ as God, the second person of the Trinity, descended upon earth to teach men by his example how to live; they go through the most elaborate ceremonies for the consummation of the sacraments, the building of temples, the sending out of missionaries, the establishment of priesthoods, for parochial administration, for the performance of rituals; but they forget one little detail, — the practice of the commandments of Jesus."* (me- the similarities between Tolstoy and Nietzsche are incredible! The Nihilistic experience shaped both of their 'core' views)

- *"We know perfectly well that the doctrine of Jesus is directed at and denounces all human errors, all tohu, all the empty idols that we try to except from the category of errors, by dubbing them "Church," "State," "Culture," "Science," "Art," "Civilization." But Jesus spoke precisely of all these, of these and all other tohu. Not only Jesus, but all the Hebrew prophets, John the Baptist, all the true sages of the world denounced the Church and State and culture and civilization of their times as sources of man's perdition."*

- *"Do you say that the doctrine of Jesus, "Resist not evil," is vain? What, then, are we to think of the lives of those who are not filled with love and compassion for their kind,—of those who make ready for their fellow-men punishment at the stake, by the knout, the wheel, the rack, chains, compulsory labor, the gibbet, dungeons, prisons for women and children, the hecatombs of war, or bring about periodical revolutions; of those who carry these horrors into execution; of those who benefit by these calamities or prepare reprisals,—are not such lives vain?"*

- *"Jesus did not appeal to me as a prophet revealing the divine law, but as one who continued and amplified the absolute divine law which I already knew; for I had very definite and complex notions about God, the creator of the world and of man..."*

- *"I sought to imagine the results if, instead of extolling our social organization as it now is, with its theatres, its romances, its sumptuous methods for stimulating sensuous desires—if, instead of this, we taught our children by precept and by example, that the reading of lascivious romances and attendance at theatres and balls are the most vulgar of all distractions, and that there is nothing more grotesque and humiliating than to pass one's time in the collection and arrangement of personal finery to make of one's body an object of show."*

- *"At first it seemed to me that all such persons had serious motives for denying the possibility of practising the doctrine of Jesus. But when I came to look into the source of their negation, I was convinced that the sceptics, in common with the believers, have a false conception of life; to them life is not what it is, but what they imagine it ought to be,—and this conception rests upon the same foundation as does that of the believers. It is true that the sceptics, who pretend to believe in nothing, believe not in God, or in Jesus, or in Adam; but they believe in a fundamental idea which is at the basis of their misconception,—in the rights of man to a life of happiness,—much more firmly than do the theologians."*

- *"To understand what is meant by "saving" one's life, according to the doctrine of Jesus, we must first understand what the prophets, what Solomon, what Buddha, what all the wise men of the world have said about the personal life of man. But, as Pascal says, we cannot endure to think upon this theme, and so we carry always before us a screen to conceal the abyss of death, toward which we are constantly moving."*

- *"If he had lived in our day, in Russia, he would have said: "Think you that those who perished in the circus at Berditchef or on the slopes of Koukouyef were sinners above all others? I tell you, No; but you, if you do not repent, if you do not arouse yourselves, if you do not find in your life that which is imperishable, you also shall perish. You are horrified by the death of those crushed by the tower, burned in the circus; but your death, equally as frightful and as inevitable, is here, before you. You are wrong to conceal it or to forget it; unlocked for, it is only more hideous."*

- *"It is in vain that we fly from danger, and guard our material life by all imaginable means; in spite of all, death is before us, if not in one way, then in another; if not by massacre, or the falling of a tower, then in our beds, amidst much greater suffering."*

- *"Is it not the act of a madman to labor at what, under any circumstances, one can never finish? Death will always come before the edifice of worldly prosperity can be completed."*

- "Death threatens us every moment...Death awaits us at every moment."

- "The principal difference between our conception of human life and that possessed by the Jews is, that while we believe that our mortal life, transmitted from generation to generation, is not the true life, but a fallen life, a life temporarily depraved,—the Jews, on the contrary, believed this life to be the true and supreme good, given to man on condition that he obey the will of God. From our point of view, the transmission of the fallen life from generation to generation is the transmission of a curse; from the Jewish point of view, it is the supreme good to which man can attain, on condition that he accomplish the will of God. It is precisely upon the Hebraic conception of life that Jesus founded his doctrine of the true or eternal life, which he contrasted with the personal and mortal life."

- "Perhaps it is right to think that man, after this terrestrial life passed in the satisfaction of personal desires, will enter upon the possession of an eternal personal life in paradise, there to taste all imaginable enjoyments; but to believe that this is so, to endeavor to persuade ourselves that for our good actions we shall be recompensed with eternal felicity, and for our bad actions punished with eternal torments,—to believe this, does not aid us in understanding the doctrine of Jesus, but, on the contrary, takes away the principal foundation of that doctrine. The entire doctrine of Jesus inculcates renunciation of the personal, imaginary life, and a merging of this personal life in the universal life of humanity, in the life of the son of man. Now the doctrine of the individual immortality of the soul does not impel us to renounce the personal life; on the contrary, it affirms the continuance of individuality forever." (me- Vivekananda, Tillich, Eckhart)

- "To live for self alone, for the animal life, is not reasonable. And so men, from their earliest existence, have sought for some reason for living aside from the gratification of their own desires; they live for their children, for their families, for their nation, for humanity, for all that does not die with the personal life."

- "If there are any who doubt the life beyond the grave and salvation based upon redemption, no one can doubt the salvation of all men, and of each individual man, if they will accept the evidence of the destruction of the personal life, and follow the true way to safety by bringing their personal wills into harmony with the will of God. Let each man endowed with reason ask himself, What is life? and What is death? and let him try to give to life and death any other meaning than that revealed by Jesus, and he will find that any attempt to find in life a meaning not based upon the renunciation of self, the service of humanity, of the son of man, is utterly futile. *It cannot be doubted that the personal life is condemned to destruction, and that a life conformable to the will of God alone gives the possibility of salvation. It is not much in comparison with the sublime belief in the future life!*" (me- Same message as Upanishads, simply in Christian language)

- "Should I die in following the doctrine of Jesus? This question did not alarm me. It might seem frightful to any one who does not realize the nothingness and absurdity of an isolated personal life, and who believes that he will never die. But I know that my life, considered in relation to my

*individual happiness, is, taken by itself, a stupendous farce, and that this meaningless existence will end in a stupid death. Knowing this, I have nothing to fear. I shall die as others die who do not observe the doctrine of Jesus; but my life and my death will have a meaning for myself and for others. My life and my death will have added something to the life and salvation of others, and this will be in accordance with the doctrine of Jesus."*

- *"In vain they pray, and observe the sacraments, and give in charity, and build churches, and convert others; they cannot follow the example of Jesus because their acts are inspired by a faith based upon an entirely different doctrine from that which they confess."* (me- Upanishads, faith over works, quietism, stuck in Earthly thinking)

-start of chapter 10 (now I want to start organizing? Ha!)

- *"We say, It is difficult to live according to the doctrine of Jesus! And why should it not be difficult, when by our organization of life we carefully hide from ourselves our true situation; when we endeavor to persuade ourselves that our situation is not at all what it is, but that it is something else?"*

- *"With us, all men live not only without truth, not only without the least desire to know truth, but with the firm conviction that, among all useless occupations, the most useless is the endeavor to find the truth that governs human life."* (me- Cobra at the door, falling from the empire state building, diligence, etc.)

- *"But why is life so full of evil? Why so much wrong-doing? May I not abstain from taking part therein? Is it impossible to lighten this heavy load that weighs me down? The reply is that this is impossible, that the desire to live well and to help others to live well is only a temptation of pride; that one thing is possible,—to save one's soul for the future life."*

- *"Our masters tell us that there are only two ways,—to believe in and obey the powers that be, to participate in the organized evil about us, or to forsake the world and take refuge in convent or monastery; to take part in the offices of the Church, doing nothing for men, and declaring the doctrine of Jesus impossible to practise, accepting the iniquity of life sanctioned by the Church, or to renounce life for what is equivalent to slow suicide."* (this is where I am, this is the *big* contradiction)

- *"However surprising the belief that the doctrine of Jesus is excellent, but impossible of practice, there is a still more surprising tradition that he who wishes to practise this doctrine, not in word, but in deed, must retire from the world. This erroneous belief that it is better for a man to retire from the world than to expose himself to temptations, existed amongst the Hebrews of old, but is entirely foreign, not only to the spirit of Christianity, but to that of the Jewish religion."*

- *"We see enough of the frightful suffering endured by men in following the doctrine of the world, but in these times we hear nothing of suffering in behalf of the doctrine of Jesus. Thirty millions of men have perished in wars, fought in behalf of the doctrine of the world; thousands of millions of beings have perished, crushed by a social system organized on the principle of the doctrine of the world; but where, in our day, shall we find a million, a thousand, a dozen, or a single one, who has died a cruel death, or has even suffered from hunger and cold, in behalf of the doctrine of Jesus? This fear of suffering is only a*

puerile excuse that proves how little we really know of Jesus' doctrine. We not only do not follow it; we do not even take it seriously."

- "Jesus tells us to take up the cross and follow him, to bear submissively the lot apportioned out to us. No one hears his words or follows his command. But let a man in a uniform decked out with gold lace, a man whose speciality is to kill his fellows, say, *"Take, not your cross, but your knapsack and carbine, and march to suffering and certain death,"*—and a mighty host is ready to receive his orders. Leaving parents, wives, and children, clad in grotesque costumes, subject to the will of the first comer of a higher rank, famished, benumbed, and exhausted by forced marches, they go, like a herd of cattle to the slaughter-house, not knowing where,—and yet these are not cattle, they are men." (me- why aren't followers of God not seen this way? Why aren't monks or hermits given the status of armed forces and their killers?)

- "We believe that the happiness of our life is in power, and domination, and abundance of worldly goods. We are so habituated to this idea that we are alarmed at the sacrifices exacted by the doctrine of Jesus, which teaches that man's happiness does not depend upon fortune and power, and that the rich cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

- "We are so accustomed to believe in all we do for the so-called security of life (the organization of armies, the building of fortresses, the provisioning of troops), that our wardrobes, our systems of medical treatment, our furniture, and our money, all seem like real and stable pledges of our existence. We forget the fate of him who resolved to build greater storehouses to provide an abundance for many years: he died in a night. Everything that we do to make our existence secure is like the act of the ostrich, when she hides her head in the sand, and does not see that her destruction is near. But we are even more foolish than the ostrich." (Vivekananda, Maya, he writes about the hare hiding his head in the ground from the hounds)

- "The doctrine of Jesus, which teaches us that we cannot possibly make life secure, but that we must be ready to die at any moment, is unquestionably preferable to the doctrine of the world, which obliges us to struggle for the security of existence. It is preferable because the impossibility of escaping death, and the impossibility of making life secure, is the same for the disciples of Jesus as it is for the disciples of the world; but, according to the doctrine of Jesus, life itself is not absorbed in the idle attempt to make existence secure."

- "To be poor means not to live in cities, but in the country, not to be shut up in close rooms, but to labor out of doors, in the woods and fields, to have the delights of sunshine, of the open heavens, of the earth, of observing the habits of dumb animals; not to rack our brains with inventing dishes to stimulate an appetite, and not to endure the pangs of indigestion. To be poor is to be hungry three times a day, to sleep without passing hours tossing upon the pillow a victim of insomnia, to have children, and have them always with us, to do nothing that we do not wish to do (this is essential), and to have no fear for anything that may happen. The poor person will be ill and will suffer; he will die like the rest of the world; but his sufferings and his death will probably be less painful than those of the rich; and he will certainly live more happily. Poverty is one of the conditions of following the doctrine of Jesus, a condition indispensable to those who would enter into the kingdom of God and be happy."

- *"Believe, if you will, in paradise, in hell, in the pope, in the Church, in the sacraments, in the redemption; pray according to the dictates of your faith, attend upon your devotions, sing your hymns,—but all this will not prevent you from practising the five commandments given by Jesus for your welfare: Be not angry; Do not commit adultery; Take no oaths; Resist not evil; Do not make war."*

- *"Jesus has shown me that the first temptation destructive of happiness is enmity toward men, anger against them. I cannot refuse to believe this, and so I cannot willingly remain at enmity with others. I cannot, as I could once, foster anger, be proud of it, fan into a flame, justify it, regarding myself as an intelligent and superior man and others as useless and foolish people. Now, when I give up to anger, I can only realize that I alone am guilty, and seek to make peace with those who have aught against me."* (me- transition from misanthropy possible? Maybe)

- *"The temptation was in separating myself from my fellows, recognizing only a few of them as my equals, and regarding all the others as persons of no account (rekim) or as uncultivated animals (fools). I see now that this wilful separation from other men, this judgment of race or fool passed upon others, was the principal source of my disagreements."* (me- Vivekananda and Tolstoy say this. I need to remedy my judgmental, angry attitude towards others)

- *"I understand now that he alone is above others who is humble with others and makes himself the servant of all. I understand now why those that are great in the sight of men are an abomination to God, who has declared woe upon the rich and mighty and invoked blessedness upon the poor and humble. Now I understand this truth, I have faith in it, and this faith has transformed my perception of what is right and important, and what is wrong and despicable. Everything that once seemed to me right and important, such as honors, glory, civilization, wealth, the complications and refinements of existence, luxury, rich food, fine clothing, etiquette, have become for me wrong and despicable. Everything that formerly seemed to me wrong and despicable, such as rusticity, obscurity, poverty, austerity, simplicity of surroundings, of food, of clothing, of manners, all have now become right and important to me."*

- *"Now, I can no longer give my support to anything that lifts me above or separates me from others."*

- *"What once seemed to me right and important—riches, proprietary rights, the point of honor, the maintenance of personal dignity and personal privileges—have now become to me wrong and despicable. Labor for others, poverty, humility, the renunciation of property and of personal privileges, have become in my eyes right and important."*

- *"I know now that the distinction I once made between my own people and those of other countries is destructive to my welfare..."*

- *"I understand now that true welfare is possible for me only on condition that I recognize my fellowship with the whole world. I believe this, and the belief has changed my estimate of what is right and wrong, important and despicable. What once seemed to me right and important—love of country, love for those of my own race, for the organization called the State, services rendered at the expense of the welfare of*

other men, military exploits—now seem to me detestable and pitiable. What once seemed to me shameful and wrong—renunciation of nationality, and the cultivation of cosmopolitanism—now seem to me right and important.”

- “I once thought that if a foreign invasion occurred, or even if evil-minded persons attacked me, and I did not defend myself, I should be robbed and beaten and tortured and killed with those whom I felt bound to protect, and this possibility troubled me. But this that once troubled me now seems desirable and in conformity with the truth. I know now that the foreign enemy and the malefactors or brigands are all men like myself; that, like myself, they love good and hate evil; that they live as I live, on the borders of death; and that, with me, they seek for salvation, and will find it in the doctrine of Jesus. The evil that they do to me will be evil to them, and so can be nothing but good for me. But if truth is unknown to them, and they do evil thinking that they do good, I, who know the truth, am bound to reveal it to them, and this I can do only by refusing to participate in evil, and thereby confessing the truth by my example.”

- “He must renounce war and do good to all men, whether they are foreigners or compatriots.”

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## 4. Chesterton

- “The whole case for Christianity is that a man who is dependent upon the luxuries of this life is a corrupt man, spiritually corrupt, politically corrupt, financially corrupt.”

- “the main problem of this book. How can we contrive to be at once astonished at the world and yet at home in it? How can this queer cosmic town, with its many-legged citizens, with its monstrous and ancient lamps, how can this world give us at once the fascination of a strange town and the comfort and honour of being our own town?”

- “If a man says that extinction is better than existence or blank existence better than variety and adventure, then he is not one of the ordinary people to whom I am talking. If a man prefers nothing I can give him nothing. But nearly all people I have ever met in this western society in which I live would agree to the general proposition that we need this life of practical romance; *the combination of something that is strange with something that is secure*. We need so to view the world as to combine an idea of wonder and an idea of welcome. *We need to be happy in this wonderland without once being merely comfortable.*”



- *"When I fancied that I stood alone I was really in the ridiculous position of being backed up by all Christendom. It may be, Heaven forgive me, that I did try to be original; but I only succeeded in inventing all by myself an inferior copy of the existing traditions of civilized religion. The man from the yacht thought he was the first to find England; I thought I was the first to find Europe. I did try to found a heresy of my own; and when I had put the last touches to it, I discovered that it was orthodoxy."* (The Kingdom of God is Within You, Universal experience, inward contemplation, etc.)

- *"Thoroughly worldly people never understand even the world; they rely altogether on a few cynical maxims which are not true."*

- *"Christianity could not at once be the black mask on a white world, and also the white mask on a black world. The state of the Christian could not be at once so comfortable that he was a coward to cling to it, and so uncomfortable that he was a fool to stand it."*

- *"The main point of Christianity was this: that Nature is not our mother: Nature is our sister. We can be proud of her beauty, since we have the same father; but she has no authority over us; we have to admire, but not to imitate. This gives to the typically Christian pleasure in this earth a strange touch of lightness that is almost frivolity."*

- *"If it be true (as it certainly is) that a man can feel exquisite happiness in skinning a cat, then the religious philosopher can only draw one of two deductions. He must either deny the existence of God, as all atheists do; or he must deny the present union between God and man, as all Christians do."*

- *"...all modern thoughts and theories may be judged by whether they tend to make a man lose his wits."*

- *"Imagination does not breed insanity. Exactly what does breed insanity is reason. Poets do not go mad; but chess-players do. Mathematicians go mad, and cashiers; but creative artists very seldom."* (me- Cantor, Godel, Boltzmann, etc.)

- *"St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators. The general fact is simple. Poetry is sane because it floats easily in an infinite sea; reason seeks to cross the infinite sea, and so make it finite. The result is mental exhaustion..."*

- *"Every one who has had the misfortune to talk with people in the heart or on the edge of mental disorder, knows that their most sinister quality is a horrible clarity of detail; a connecting of one thing with another in a map more elaborate than a maze. If you argue with a madman, it is extremely probable that you will get the worst of it; for in many ways his mind moves all the quicker for not being delayed by the things that go with good judgment. He is not hampered by a sense of humour or by charity, or by the dumb certainties of experience. He is the more logical for losing certain sane affections. Indeed, the common phrase for insanity is in this respect a misleading one. The madman is not the man who has lost his reason. The madman is the man who has lost everything except his reason."*

- *"The new scientific society definitely discourages men from thinking about death; it is a fact, but it is considered a morbid fact."*

- *"Take first the more obvious case of materialism. As an explanation of the world, materialism has a sort of insane simplicity. It has just the quality of the madman's argument; we have at once the sense of it covering everything and the sense of it leaving everything out...His cosmos may be complete in every rivet and cog-wheel, but still his cosmos is smaller than our world. Somehow his scheme, like the lucid scheme of the madman, seems unconscious of the alien energies and the large indifference of the earth; it is not thinking of the real things of the earth, of fighting peoples or proud mothers, or first love or fear upon the sea. The earth is so very large, and the cosmos is so very small. The cosmos is about the smallest hole that a man can hide his head in."*

- *"Now it is the charge against the main deductions of the materialist that, right or wrong, they gradually destroy his humanity; I do not mean only kindness, I mean hope, courage, poetry, initiative, all that is human. For instance, when materialism leads men to complete fatalism (as it generally does), it is quite idle to pretend that it is in any sense a liberating force."*

- *"But it is a much more massive and important fact that he is not free to praise, to curse, to thank, to justify, to urge, to punish, to resist temptations, to incite mobs, to make New Year resolutions, to pardon sinners, to rebuke tyrants, or even to say "thank you" for the mustard."*

- *"...the chief mark and element of insanity; we may say in summary that it is reason used without root, reason in the void."*

- *"But the modern critics of religious authority are like men who should attack the police without ever having heard of burglars. For there is a great and possible peril to the human mind: a peril as practical as burglary. Against it religious authority was reared, rightly or wrongly, as a barrier. And against it something certainly must be reared as a barrier, if our race is to avoid ruin."*

- *"It is idle to talk always of the alternative of reason and faith. Reason is itself a matter of faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all. If you are merely a sceptic, you must sooner or later ask yourself the question, "Why should anything go right; even observation and deduction? Why should not good logic be as misleading as bad logic?"*

- *"Evolution is a good example of that modern intelligence which, if it destroys anything, destroys itself. Evolution is either an innocent scientific description of how certain earthly things came about; or, if it is anything more than this, it is an attack upon thought itself. If evolution destroys anything, it does not destroy religion but rationalism. If evolution simply means that a positive thing called an ape turned very slowly into a positive thing called a man, then it is stingless for the most orthodox; for a personal God might just as well do things slowly as quickly, especially if, like the Christian God, he were outside time. But if it means anything more, it means that there is no such thing as an ape to change, and no such thing as a man for him to change into. It means that there is no such thing as a thing. At best, there is only one*

thing, and that is a flux of everything and anything. This is an attack not upon the faith, but upon the mind; you cannot think if there are no things to think about."

- *"If the standard changes, how can there be improvement, which implies a standard? Nietzsche started a nonsensical idea that men had once sought as good what we now call evil; if it were so, we could not talk of surpassing or even falling short of them."*

- "I agree with the pragmatists that apparent objective truth is not the whole matter; that there is an authoritative need to believe the things that are necessary to the human mind. But I say that one of those necessities precisely is a belief in objective truth."

- "As a politician, he will cry out that war is a waste of life, and then, as a philosopher, that all life is waste of time. A Russian pessimist will denounce a policeman for killing a peasant, and then prove by the highest philosophical principles that the peasant ought to have killed himself...The man of this school goes first to a political meeting, where he complains that savages are treated as if they were beasts; then he takes his hat and umbrella and goes on to a scientific meeting, where he proves that they practically are beasts...By rebelling against everything he has lost his right to rebel against anything."

- "...the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Tolstoy, Nietzsche and Shaw, as clearly as an inevitable railway smash could be seen from a balloon. They are all on the road to the emptiness of the asylum. For madness may be defined as using mental activity so as to reach mental helplessness; and they have nearly reached it."

- "It has the same strange method of the reverent sceptic. *It discredits supernatural stories that have some foundation, simply by telling natural stories that have no foundation.*"

- "Joan of Arc was not stuck at the cross-roads, either by rejecting all the paths like Tolstoy, or by accepting them all like Nietzsche. She chose a path, and went down it like a thunderbolt. Yet Joan, when I came to think of her, had in her all that was true either in Tolstoy or Nietzsche, all that was even tolerable in either of them. I thought of all that is noble in Tolstoy, the pleasure in plain things, especially in plain pity, the actualities of the earth, the reverence for the poor, the dignity of the bowed back. Joan of Arc had all that and with this great addition, that she endured poverty as well as admiring it; whereas Tolstoy is only a typical aristocrat trying to find out its secret. And then I thought of all that was brave and proud and pathetic in poor Nietzsche, and his mutiny against the emptiness and timidity of our time. I thought of his cry for the ecstatic equilibrium of danger, his hunger for the rush of great horses, his cry to arms. Well, Joan of Arc had all that, and again with this difference, that she did not praise fighting, but fought. We know that she was not afraid of an army, while Nietzsche, for all we know, was afraid of a cow. *Tolstoy only praised the peasant; she was the peasant. Nietzsche only praised the warrior; she was the warrior.*"

- "As if there were any inconsistency between having love for humanity and having hatred for inhumanity!"

- "The Laws of Nature...We must answer that it is magic. It is not a "law," for we do not understand its general formula. It is not a necessity, for though we can count on it happening practically, we have no right to say that it must always happen. It is no argument for unalterable law (as Huxley fancied) that *we count on the ordinary course of things. We do not count on it; we bet on it...*the ordinary scientific man is strictly a sentimentalist. He is a sentimentalist in this essential sense, that he is soaked and swept away by mere associations. He has so often seen birds fly and lay eggs that he feels as if there must be some dreamy, tender connection between the two ideas, whereas there is none."

- (on scientific men) "This man walks about the streets and can see and appreciate everything; only he cannot remember who he is. Well, every man is that man in the story. Every man has forgotten who he is. One may understand the cosmos, but never the ego; the self is more distant than any star. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God; but thou shalt not know thyself. We are all under the same mental calamity; we have all forgotten our names. We have all forgotten what we really are."

- "The really curious thing was this: that modern thought contradicted this basic creed of my boyhood on its two most essential doctrines. I have explained that the fairy tales founded in me two convictions; first, that this world is a wild and startling place, which might have been quite different, but which is quite delightful; second, that before this wildness and delight one may well be modest and submit to the queerest limitations of so queer a kindness."

- "Can he hate it enough to change it, and yet love it enough to think it worth changing? Can he look up at its colossal good without once feeling acquiescence? Can he look up at its colossal evil without once feeling despair? Can he, in short, be at once not only a pessimist and an optimist, but a fanatical pessimist and a fanatical optimist? Is he enough of a pagan to die for the world, and enough of a Christian to die to it? In this combination, I maintain, it is the rational optimist who fails, the irrational optimist who succeeds. He is ready to smash the whole universe for the sake of itself."

- "*An imbecile habit has arisen in modern controversy of saying that such and such a creed can be held in one age but cannot be held in another. Some dogma, we are told, was credible in the twelfth century, but is not credible in the twentieth. You might as well say that a certain philosophy can be believed on Mondays, but cannot be believed on Tuesdays.*" (me- Ha!)

- "I had often called myself an optimist, to avoid the too evident blasphemy of pessimism. But all the optimism of the age had been false and disheartening for this reason, that it had always been trying to prove that we fit in to the world. *The Christian optimism is based on the fact that we do not fit in to the world.* I had tried to be happy by telling myself that man is an animal, like any other which sought its meat from God. *But now I really was happy, for I had learnt that man is a monstrosity.* I had been right in feeling all things as odd, for I myself was at once worse and better than all things. The optimist's pleasure was prosaic, for it dwelt on the naturalness of everything; *the Christian pleasure was poetic, for it dwelt on the unnaturalness of everything in the light of the supernatural.*"

- "They did prove to me in Chapter I. (to my complete satisfaction) that Christianity was too pessimistic; and then, in Chapter II., they began to prove to me that it was a great deal too optimistic."
- "He can only get away from death by continually stepping within an inch of it...He must not merely cling to life, for then he will be a coward, and will not escape. He must not merely wait for death, for then he will be a suicide, and will not escape. He must seek his life in a spirit of furious indifference to it; he must desire life like water and yet drink death like wine."
- "Here again, in short, Christianity got over the difficulty of combining furious opposites, by keeping them both, and keeping them both furious. The Church was positive on both points. One can hardly think too little of one's self. One can hardly think too much of one's soul."
- "St. Francis, in praising all good, could be a more shouting optimist than Walt Whitman. St. Jerome, in denouncing all evil, could paint the world blacker than Schopenhauer. Both passions were free because both were kept in their place. The optimist could pour out all the praise he liked on the gay music of the march, the golden trumpets, and the purple banners going into battle. But he must not call the fight needless. The pessimist might draw as darkly as he chose the sickening marches or the sanguine wounds. But he must not call the fight hopeless."
- *"The whole case for Christianity is that a man who is dependent upon the luxuries of this life is a corrupt man, spiritually corrupt, politically corrupt, financially corrupt."*

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## 5. St. John of the Cross

- *"The doctrine of Christ which He came into the world to teach, is contempt of all things, that we may thereby have power to receive the reward of the Spirit of God. The earth 'void and nothing,' signifies that the earth and all it contains are nothing, and the heavens without light, that all the lights of heaven, in comparison with God, are perfect darkness."*
- "The whole creation (all wisdom, sweetness, goodness, liberty, riches, etc.), compared with the infinite Being of God, is nothing; and so the soul whose affections are set on created things is nothing, and even less than nothing before God, because love begets equality and likeness, and even inferiority to the object beloved. For he who does not withdraw himself from the things of the world, is not qualified to receive the Spirit of God in the pure transformation. There is nothing in the whole world to be compared with God;

and, therefore, he who loves anything together with Him, wrongs Him. And if this be true, what does he do who loves anything more than God?"

- "When we have tasted the sweetness of the Spirit, all that is flesh becomes insipid; that is, it profits us no more, and the ways of sense are no longer pleasing."

- "Thus the way in which God leads man to perfection is the way of his natural constitution, raising him up from what is vile and exterior to that which is interior and noble."

- "The earth 'void and nothing,' signifies that the earth and all it contains are nothing, and the heavens without light, that all the lights of heaven, in comparison with God, are perfect darkness. Thus all created things, with the affections bestowed upon them, are nothing, because they are a hindrance, and the privation of our transformation in God, just as darkness is nothing, and less than nothing, being the absence of light. And as he who is in darkness comprehends not the light, so the soul whose affections are given to the creature shall never comprehend God. Until our soul is purged of these affections we shall not possess God in this life in the pure transformation of love, nor in the life to come in the beatific vision."

- "The whole creation, compared with the infinite Being of God, is nothing; and so the soul whose affections are set on created things is nothing, and even less than nothing before God, because love begets equality and likeness, and even inferiority to the object beloved."

- "All the grace and comeliness of creation, compared with the Grace of God, is supreme disgrace and supreme disfavour, and that soul, therefore, which is captivated by the grace and comeliness of created things is in the eyes of God in disfavour and disgrace, incapable of the infinite grace and beauty, for that which is ill-favoured is far removed from that which is infinitely gracious."

- "All the goodness of the whole world together, in comparison with the infinite Goodness of God, is wickedness rather than goodness, for 'None is good but God alone,' and that soul is, therefore, wicked before God, whose affections are set on the things of this world."

- "All the sweetness and all the pleasures which all the things of this world furnish to the will are, in comparison with the sweetness and pleasure which is God, supreme pain, torment, and bitterness."

- "All the riches and glory of the whole creation compared with the true riches, which is God, is supreme poverty and meanness, and he who sets his heart upon them is, in God's sight, supremely poor and mean, and can never attain to the blessed estate of riches and glory, which is the transformation of the soul in God; for that which is mean and poor is infinitely distant from that which is supremely rich and glorious."

- "the Divine Wisdom bewails men; namely, because they make themselves loathsome, mean, wretched and poor, through their love for that which is beautiful, rich, and noble in the eyes of the world."

- "Here God addresses Himself to those who set their affections on the things of this world; He calls them little ones, because they make themselves little, like the object of their love. He bids them 'understand subtlety,' and 'take notice,' because He is speaking of great things, and not of little things, such as they are."

- "For though the things of this world may seem to men to be something, yet let them take notice, the things of God are more."

- "This is applicable to every kind of affection to which we are liable in this life."

- "It is, therefore, supreme ignorance for anyone to think that he can ever attain to the high estate of union with God before he casts away from him the desire of natural things, and of supernatural also, so far as it concerns self-love, because the distance between them and the state of perfection is the very greatest."

- "The doctrine of Christ which He came into the world to teach, is contempt of all things, that we may thereby have power to receive the reward of the Spirit of God. For he who does not withdraw himself from the things of the world, is not qualified to receive the Spirit of God in the pure transformation."

- "...while they seek spiritual food, are not content with God only, but intermingle therewith carnal and earthly satisfactions." (I do this, divided-self)

- "Oh, would that spiritual persons knew how they are losing the good things of the Spirit, abundantly furnished, because they will not raise up their desires above trifles, and how they might have the sweetness of all things in the pure food of the Spirit if they would only forego them. But as they will not, so they shall not have such sweetness."

- "This journey or ascent must therefore be a perpetual struggle with our desires to make them cease, and the more earnest we are the sooner shall we reach the summit. But until the desires cease we can never reach it, notwithstanding our many virtues, for virtue is not perfectly acquired before our souls are empty, detached, and purified from all desire."

- "He, therefore, who will ascend to the mount of perfection, to build an altar there, whereon to offer unto God the sacrifice of pure love, praise, and adoration, must first of all perfectly fulfill" the three commandments of Jacob. He must cast away the strange gods, the earthly affections and attachments. He must purify himself from the impressions which the desires have made on the soul, in the obscure night of sense, denying them and doing penance for their past indulgence, and, in the third place, he must change his garments."

- "This God himself will do during the observance of the first two commandments; He will change them from old into new, by infusing into the soul a new understanding of God in God, the human understanding being set aside, and a new love of God in God, the will being detached from its old desires and human satisfactions, by bringing the soul into a state of new knowledge and of deep delight, all other

knowledge and old imaginings being castaway; and, finally, by causing that which is of the old man to cease, which is our natural aptitudes, and investing us with a new supernatural aptitude corresponding with the powers of the soul, so that all that is human in the action of the soul may become divine. This is the object gained in the estate of union, in which the soul is nothing else but an altar of God whereon the sacrifice of praise and love is offered, and where He alone dwells.”

- “It is the will of God that the soul should be empty of all created things, so that it may become a fitting altar of His Majesty.”

- “It is evident that the faith is a dark night to the soul, and it is thus that it gives it light; the more it darkens the soul the more does it enlighten it. It is by darkening that it gives light, according to the words of the prophet, ‘If you will not believe,’ that is, ‘if you do not make yourselves blind you shall not understand’ — that is, you shall have no light, the high and supernatural knowledge. The faith was foreshadowed by the cloud which divided Egyptians from the children of Israel at the entrance of the Red Sea. ‘It was a dark cloud enlightening the night.’ How wonderful a cloud! — its darkness illumines the night.”

- “For man who is in darkness cannot be rightly enlightened except by darkness...”

- “The teaching set before us here then is, that the faith, which is obscure night, illumines the soul which is in darkness, according to the words of the Psalmist, ‘Night shall be my light in my pleasures,’ that is, in the pleasures of pure contemplation and of union with God. The night of faith shall guide me. The soul, therefore, must be in darkness that it may have light, and be able to journey on the spiritual road.”

- “The Abyss of Faith”

- “I say, then, that the soul, to be rightly guided by faith to this estate, must be in darkness, not only as to that part thereof— the sensual and the inferior, of which I have already spoken— which regards temporal and created things, but also as to that part thereof, the rational and the superior, of which I am now speaking, which regards God and spiritual things.”

- “Greatly embarrassed, then, is the soul, on the road of the Divine union, when it leans at all on its own understanding, sense, imagination, judgment, will, or any other habits of its own, or anything peculiar to itself, not knowing how to release and detach itself therefrom.”

- “I mean ways of understanding, perceiving, or feeling, though it has all ways at the same time, as one who, possessing nothing, yet possesseth everything.”

- “This relates to the spiritual road: he who is in darkness, blind as to his own proper and natural light, shall see supernaturally, and he who shall rely on any light of his own, the greater will be his blindness, and the more he shall be hindered on the way to the divine union.”



- “And because no creature can, by any actions or capabilities of its own, attain to that which is God, *the soul must be therefore detached from all created things*, from all actions and capabilities of its own, that is from its own understanding, taste, and feeling, so that passing by everything which is unlike to, and not in conformity with God, it may attain to the receiving of His likeness, and resting upon nothing which is not His will, it may be so transformed in Him.”

- “...the more the soul cleaves to created things, relying on its own strength, by habit and inclination, the less it is disposed for this union, because it does not completely resign itself into the hands of God, that He may transform it supernaturally.”

- “...the fitting disposition for this union is, not that the soul should understand, taste, feel, or imagine anything on the subject of the nature of God, or any other thing whatever, but only that pureness and love which is perfect resignation, and complete detachment from all things for God alone.”

- “For though it be true that every soul, according to its measure, great or little, may attain to this union, yet all do not in an equal degree, but only as our Lord shall give unto each; as it is with the blessed in heaven, there some see God more perfectly than others, and yet all see Him and all are satisfied and happy, for each one is filled with the vision according to his merits, greater or less. Hence it comes to pass, that though souls in this life enjoy equal peace and tranquillity in their state of perfection, everyone being satisfied, nevertheless some of them may be more advanced than the rest, in a higher degree of union, and yet all equally satisfied according to their several dispositions, and the knowledge they have of God. But that soul which does not attain to that degree of purity corresponding with the light and vocation it has received from God, will never obtain true peace and contentment, because it has not attained to that detachment, and emptiness of its powers, which are requisite for this pure union.”

- “And though the intellect derives certainty from Faith, yet it does not derive clearness but rather obscurity. As to Hope, there is no doubt that it renders the memory empty, and brings darkness over it as to all surrounding objects, for hope is ever conversant with that which is not in possession, for if it were already possessed there would be no place for hope...”

- “Charity, too, in the same way empties the will of all things, for it compels us to love God above all, which we cannot do without withdrawing our affections from every object, to fix them wholly upon God. Christ our Lord hath said, ‘Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be My disciple.’ Thus these virtues bring darkness over the soul, and empty it of all created things.”

- “Our Lord saith, ‘How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it.’ By this He teaches us that the soul that will enter in by the gate of Christ, which is the beginning of the road, must first of all constrain itself, and detach the will from the things of time and sense, loving God above them all. This refers to the night of the senses.

“He says also, ‘Few there are that find it.’ Mark here the reason of this, which is that there are but few who understand how, and desire, to enter into this supreme detachment and emptiness of spirit.”

- Some consider any kind of retirement from the world, and any correction of excesses to be sufficient; others are content with a certain degree of virtue, persevere in prayer and practise mortification, but, they do not rise to this detachment, and poverty, or self-denial, or spiritual pureness— all these are one— which our Saviour here recommends, because they nourish and clothe their natural self with consolations, instead of detaching themselves therefrom, and denying themselves in all things for God. *They think it enough to deny themselves in the things of this world, without annihilating themselves, and purging away all self-seeking in spiritual things.* Hence it comes to pass, that when any of this solid devotion presents itself to them, which consists in the annihilation of all sweetness in God, in dryness, in distaste, in trouble, which is the real spiritual cross, and the nakedness of the spiritual poverty of Christ, they run away from it as from death itself. *They seek only for delights, for sweet communications, and what, satisfactions in God, but this is not self-denial, nor detachment of spirit, but rather spiritual gluttony.* They render themselves spiritually enemies of the cross of Christ, for true spirituality seeks for bitterness rather than sweetness in God, inclines to suffering more than to consolation, and to be in want of everything for God rather than to possess; to dryness and afflictions rather than to sweet communications, knowing well that this is to follow Christ and deny self, while the other course is perhaps nothing but to seek oneself in God, which is the very opposite of love. For to seek Self in God is to seek for comfort and refreshment from God. But to seek God in Himself is not only to be willingly deprived of this thing and of that for God, but to incline ourselves to will and choose for Christ's sake whatever is most disagreeable, whether proceeding from God or from the world; this is to love God."

- "This burden is the cross. For if we are determined to submit ourselves, and to carry the cross— this is nothing else but an earnest resolution to seek and endure it in everything for God— we shall find great refreshment and sweetness therein to enable us to travel along this road, thus *detached from all things, desiring nothing.* But if we cling to anything whatever, whether it come from God or from the world, we are not journeying in detachment and self-denial, and so we shall miss our way, and never be able to ascend the narrow path."

- "...giving themselves up to suffer for Christ's sake, and annihilating themselves utterly. He who shall exercise himself herein, will then find all this and much more. And if he be deficient at all in this exercise, which is the sum and root of all virtue, all he may do will be but beating the air— utterly profitless, notwithstanding great meditations and communications. There is no progress but in the imitation of Christ..."

- "And when he shall have been brought to nothing, when his humility is perfect, then will take place the union of the soul and God, which is the highest and noblest estate attainable in this life."

- "...the Psalmist saith of him, 'I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.'"

- "...I see that Jesus Christ is but little known by those who consider themselves His friends. These, loving themselves very much, seek in Him their own comfort and satisfaction, and not His sufferings and death for love of Him. I am now speaking of those who think themselves His friends, not of those who live at a

great distance from Him ; men of learning and of dignity, and others who . live in the world, slaves of ambition and of honours— of these, we may say, they know not Christ...”

- “All that the intellect may comprehend; all that the will may be satisfied with; and all that the imagination may conceive, is most unlike unto God, and most disproportionate to Him.”

- “the intellect cannot be immediately directed in the way of God by any knowledge such as this, and that, if it is to draw near unto God, it must do so by not understanding rather than by seeking to understand; yea, rather it must be by making itself blind, covering itself with darkness, and not by opening its eyes, that it can attain to the Divine enlightening. Hence it is that Contemplation, by which God enlightens the intellect, is called Mystical Theology, that is, the secret Wisdom of God, because it is a secret even to the intellect which receives it. S. Dionysius calls it a ray of darkness.”

- “Aristotle says, that as the eyes of the bat are with regard to the sun, which wholly blinds them, so is our intellect with regard to the greater Light of God which is to us perfect darkness.”

- “there is nothing which can serve as a ladder whereby it may ascend unto God, who is so high. Yea, rather we must acknowledge that all and each of these things, if the intellect will use them as proximate means of union, will prove not only a hindrance, but the source of many errors and delusions, in the ascent of this mountain.”

- “And thus by this means alone, that is faith, God manifests Himself to the soul in the Divine light, which surpasses all understanding, and therefore the greater the faith of the soul the more is that soul united to God. This is the meaning of S. Paul when he said, ‘He that cometh to God must believe that He is.’ Such an one must walk by faith, with his understanding in darkness, and in the obscurity of faith only; *for in this darkness God unites Himself to the intellect, being Himself hidden beneath it...*”

- “the outward bodily senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching. With respect to these, spiritual men are occasionally liable to representations and objects, set before them in a supernatural way. They sometimes see the forms and figures of those of another life, Saints, or Angels good and evil, or certain extraordinary lights and brightness. They hear strange words, sometimes seeing those who utter them, and sometimes not. They have a sensible perception at times of most sweet odours, without knowing whence they proceed...Still, though the bodily senses may be thus affected in the way of God, *we must never rely on these emotions, nor encourage them; yea, rather we must fly from them*, without examining whether they be good or evil. For, inasmuch as they are exterior and in the body, there is the less certainty of their being from God. It is more natural that God should communicate Himself through the spirit...*The bodily sense is as ignorant of spiritual things, as a beast of the field is of the things of reason.*”

- “For, although these things communicate some spirituality, as is always the case when they proceed from God, yet it is much less than it would have been, *had they been more spiritual and interior; and thus they become more easily and readily occasions of error, presumption, and vanity.* As they are so palpable and so material they excite the senses greatly, and the soul is led to consider them the more important, the more

they are felt. It runs after them and abandons the secure guidance of Faith, thinking that the light they give is a guide and means to that which it desires, union with God. Thus the soul, the more it makes of such things, the more it strays from the perfect way and means, that is, Faith."

- "The spiritual man must therefore reject all these apprehensions, together with the corporeal satisfactions to which the exterior senses are liable..."

- "How sad it is to see men who, when the soul would be at peace in the repose of interior quiet, where God fills it with refreshment and peace, disturb it, draw it away to outward things, compel it to travel again along the road it had passed, and to abandon the goal..."

- "To these my counsel is— learn to abide with attention in loving waiting upon God in the state of quiet; give no heed to your imagination, nor to its operations, for now, as I have said, the powers of the soul are at rest, and are not exercised, except in the sweet and pure waiting of love."

- "The soul, therefore, that will ascend to this perfect union with God, must be careful not to lean upon imaginary visions, forms, figures, and particular intelligible objects, for these things can never serve as proportionate or proximate means towards so great an end: yea, rather they are an obstacle in the way, and therefore to be guarded against and rejected."

### *The Dark Night of the Soul*

- "There are other of these spiritual persons, again, who fall into another kind of spiritual wrath: this happens when they become irritated at the sins of others, and keep watch on those others with a sort of uneasy zeal. At times the impulse comes to them to reprove them angrily, and occasionally they go so far as to indulge it and set themselves up as masters of virtue. All this is contrary to spiritual meekness." (me- Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Tolstoy, Seraphim, etc.)

- "*they have lost their love of the things of the world and have gained some degree of spiritual strength in God; this has enabled them to some extent to refrain from creature desires, so that for God's sake they are now able to suffer a light burden and a little aridity without turning back to a time which they found more pleasant.*"

- "*when they believe that the sun of Divine favour is shining most brightly upon them, God turns all this light of theirs into darkness, and shuts against them the door...And thus He leaves them so completely in the dark that they know not whither to go with their sensible imagination and meditation; for they cannot advance a step in meditation, as they were wont to do afore time, their inward senses being submerged in this night, and left with such dryness that not only do they experience no pleasure and consolation in the spiritual things and good exercises wherein they were wont to find their delights and pleasures, but instead, on the contrary, they find insipidity and bitterness in the said*

things. For, as I have said, God now sees that they have grown a little, and are becoming strong enough to lay aside their swaddling clothes and be taken from the gentle breast; so He sets them down from His arms and teaches them to walk on their own feet; which they feel to be very strange, for everything seems to be going wrong with them."

- "The first is whether, when a soul finds no pleasure or consolation in the things of God, it also fails to find it in any thing created; for, as God sets the soul in this dark night to the end that He may quench and purge its sensual desire, He allows it not to find attraction or sweetness in anything whatsoever."

- "The second sign whereby a man may believe himself to be experiencing the said purgation is that the memory is ordinarily centred upon God, with painful care and solicitude, thinking that it is not serving God, but is backsliding, because it finds itself without sweetness in the things of God."

- "From all these it is freed when this night quenches within it all pleasures, whether from above or from below, and makes all meditation darkness to it, and grants it other innumerable blessings in the acquirement of the virtues, as we shall now show. For it will be a matter of great pleasure and great consolation, to one that journeys on this road, to see how that which seems to the soul so severe and adverse, and so contrary to spiritual pleasure, works in it so many blessings. These, as we say, are gained when the soul goes forth, as regards its affection and operation, by means of this night, from all created things, and when it journeys to eternal things, which is great happiness and good fortune: first, because of the great blessing which is in the quenching of the desire and affection with respect to all things; secondly, because they are very few that endure and persevere in entering by this strait gate and by the narrow way which leads to life, as says Our Saviour."

- "The strait gate is this night of sense, and the soul detaches itself from sense and strips itself thereof that it may enter by this gate, and establishes itself in faith, which is a stranger to all sense, so that afterwards it may journey by the narrow way, which is the other night— that of the spirit— and this the soul afterwards enters in order in journey to God in pure faith, which is the means whereby the soul is united to God. By this road, since it is so narrow, dark and terrible (though there is no comparison between this night of sense and that other, in its darkness and trials, as we shall say later), they are far fewer that journey, but its benefits are far greater without comparison than those of this present night."

- "This is the first and principal benefit caused by this arid and dark night of contemplation: the knowledge of oneself and of one's misery."

- "Wherefore the soul knows the truth that it knew not at first, concerning its own misery; for, at the time when it was clad as for a festival and found in God much pleasure, consolation and support, it was somewhat more satisfied and contented, since it thought itself to some extent to be serving God. It is true that such souls may not have this idea explicitly in their minds; but some suggestion of it at least is implanted in them by the satisfaction which they find in their pleasant experiences. But, now that the soul has put on its other and working attire— that of aridity and abandonment— and now that its first lights have turned into darkness, it possesses these lights more truly in this virtue of self-knowledge, which is so excellent and so necessary, considering itself now as nothing and experiencing no satisfaction in itself; for it sees that it does nothing of itself neither can do anything."

- "It is that, in this dark night of the desire (to the end that the words of the Prophet may be fulfilled, namely: *'Thy light shall shine in the darkness'*), God will enlighten the soul, giving it knowledge, not only of its lowliness and wretchedness, as we have said, but likewise of the greatness and excellence of God. For, as well as quenching the desires and pleasures and attachments of sense, He cleanses and frees the understanding that it may understand the truth; for pleasure of sense and desire, even though it be for spiritual things, darkens and obstructs the spirit, and furthermore that straitness and aridity of sense enlightens and quickens the understanding, as says Isaias. Vexation makes us to understand how the soul that is empty and disencumbered, as is necessary for His Divine influence, is instructed supernaturally by God in His Divine wisdom, through this dark and arid night of contemplation, as we have said; and this instruction God gave not in those first sweetnesses and joys."

- "It is a wondrous thing that David should say here that the means and the preparation for his knowledge of the glory of God were not the spiritual delights and the many pleasures which he had experienced, but the aridities and detachments of his sensual nature, which is here to be understood by the dry and desert land."

- "So that the means to a knowledge of God and of oneself is this dark night with its aridities and voids, although it leads not to a knowledge of Him of the same plenitude and abundance that comes from the other night of the spirit, since this is only, as it were, the beginning of that other."

- "It follows clearly, then, that, by walking in darkness, not only is the soul not lost, but it has even greatly gained, since it is here gaining the virtues." (me- non-movement, quietism, earthly renunciation, awareness of the Other, Plato's Forms/Cave, etc. The 'Darkness' being the Nihilism of this world, Tillich saying that doubt shows true faith)

- "For in such a way does this *dark night of contemplation* absorb and immerse the soul in itself, and so near does it bring the soul to God, that it protects and delivers it from all that is not God. For this soul is now, as it were, undergoing a cure, in order that it may regain its health— its health being God Himself. His Majesty restricts it to a diet and abstinence from all things, and takes away its appetite for them all. It is like a sick man, who, if he is respected by those in his house, is carefully tended so that he may be cured; the air is not allowed to touch him, nor may he even enjoy the light, nor must he hear footsteps, nor yet the noise of those in the house; and he is given food that is very delicate, and even that only in great moderation— food that is nourishing rather than delectable."

- "All these particularities (which are for the security and safekeeping of the soul) are caused by *this dark contemplation*, because it brings the soul nearer to God. For the nearer the soul approaches Him, the blacker is the darkness which it feels and the deeper is the obscurity which comes through its weakness; just as, the nearer a man approaches the sun, the greater are the darkness and the affliction caused him through the great splendour of the sun and through the weakness and impurity of his eyes. In the same way, so immense is the spiritual light of God, and so greatly does it transcend our natural understanding, that the nearer we approach it, the more it blinds and darkens us."

- *"For indeed, when this purgative contemplation is most severe, the soul feels very keenly the shadow of death and the lamentations of death and the pains of hell, which consist in its feeling itself to be without God, and chastised and cast out, and unworthy of Him; and it feels that He is wroth with it. All this is felt by the soul in this condition — yea, and more, for it believes that it is so with it for ever."*

- *"The fourth kind of pain is caused in the soul by another excellence of this dark contemplation, which is its majesty and greatness, from which arises in the soul a consciousness of the other extreme which is in itself— namely, that of the deepest poverty and wretchedness: this is one of the chiefest pains that it suffers in this purgation. For it feels within itself a profound emptiness and impoverishment of three kinds of good, which are ordained for the pleasure of the soul which are the temporal, the natural and the spiritual; and finds itself set in the midst of the evils contrary to these, namely, miseries of imperfection, aridity and emptiness of the apprehensions of the faculties and abandonment of the spirit in darkness."*

- *"All this God brings to pass by means of this dark contemplation; wherein the soul not only suffers this emptiness and the suspension of these natural supports and perceptions, which is a most afflictive suffering (as if a man were suspended or held in the air so that he could not breathe), but likewise He is purging the soul, annihilating it, emptying it or consuming in it (even as fire consumes the mouldiness and the rust of metal) all the affections and imperfect habits which it has contracted in its whole life."*

- *"Herein is described the grave suffering which the soul here endures in the purgation of the fire of this contemplation, for the Prophet says here that, in order for the rust of the affections which are within the soul to be purified and destroyed, it is needful that, in a certain manner, the soul itself should be annihilated and destroyed, since these passions and imperfections have become natural to it."*

- *"...immersed in the realization of those evils wherein it sees its own miseries so clearly, that it thinks that, as its director observes not that which it sees and feels, he is speaking in this manner because he understands it not; and so, instead of comfort, it rather receives fresh affliction, since it believes that its director's advice contains no remedy for its troubles. And, in truth, this is so; for, until the Lord shall have completely purged it after the manner that He wills, no means or remedy is of any service or profit for the relief of its affliction; the more so because the soul is as powerless in this case as one who has been imprisoned in a dark dungeon, and is bound hand and foot, and can neither move nor see, nor feel any favour whether from above or from below, until the spirit is humbled, softened and purified, and grows so keen and delicate and pure that it can become one with the Spirit of God, according to the degree of union of love which His mercy is pleased to grant it; in proportion to this the purgation is of greater or less severity and of greater or less duration."* (me- "No one can help me. I am scared that I know that they can't do anything for me. Even more terrifying: they may not even understand me. They are most likely not aware that they cannot help me.") Chapter 7 second book

- *"...it will last for some years, however severe it be; since the purgative process allows intervals of relief wherein, by the dispensation of God, this dark contemplation ceases to assail the soul in the form and manner of purgation, and assails it after an illuminative and a loving manner, wherein the soul, like one that has gone forth from this dungeon and imprisonment, and is brought into the recreation of*

spaciousness and liberty, feels and experiences great sweetness of peace and loving friendship with God, together with a ready abundance of spiritual communication.”

- “BUT there is another thing here that afflicts and distresses the soul greatly, which is that, as this dark night has hindered its faculties and affections in this way, it is unable to raise its affection or its mind to God, neither can it pray to Him, thinking, as Jeremias thought concerning himself, that God has set a cloud before it through which its prayer cannot pass.”

- “much less can it attend to other things and affairs which are temporal. Not only so, but it has likewise such distractions and times of such profound forgetfulness of the memory that frequent periods pass by without its knowing what it has been doing or thinking, or what it is that it is doing or is going to do, neither can it pay attention, although it desire to do so, to anything that occupies it.” (me- I always feel that my mind is empty. I feel that I do not know anything.”

- *“All this, says Divine Scripture, took place by night, when Jacob slept, in order to express how secret is this road and ascent to God, and how different from that of man’s knowledge. This is very evident, since ordinarily that which is of the greatest profit in it — namely, to be ever losing oneself and becoming as nothing — is considered the worst thing possible; and that which is of least worth, which is for a soul to find consolation and sweetness (wherein it ordinarily loses rather than gains), is considered best.”*

- *“On this step the lover must see that which he loves, or die...”*

- “As God is not comprehended under any form, or likeness, or particular conception, so the soul also, if it is to be united to Him, must not be under the power of any particular form or conception.” (symbolism, Tillich, Vivekananda)

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## 6. Fr. Seraphim Rose

### *Nihilism: The Root of the Revolution of the Modern Age*

- “Everything in this life passes away — only God remains, only He is worth struggling towards. We have a choice: to follow the way of this world, of the society that surrounds us, and thereby find ourselves outside of God; or to choose the way of life, to choose God Who calls us and for Whom our heart is searching.”



- *"And indeed the Christian is, in a certain sense--in an ultimate sense--a "Nihilist"; for to him, in the end, the world is nothing, and God is all. This is, of course, the precise opposite of the Nihilism we have examined here, where God is nothing and the world is all; that is a Nihilism that proceeds from the Abyss, and the Christian's is a "Nihilism" that proceeds from abundance. The true Nihilist places his faith in things that pass away and end in nothing; all "optimism" on this foundation is clearly futile. The Christian, renouncing such vanity places his faith in the one thing that will not pass away, the Kingdom of God."*

- *"To him who lives in Christ, of course, many of the goods of this world may be given back, and he may enjoy them even while realizing their evanescence; but they are not needful, they are truly nothing to him. He who does not live in Christ, on the other hand, already lives in the Abyss, and not all the treasures of this world can ever fill his emptiness."*

- *"Why do men learn through pain and suffering, and not through pleasure and happiness? Very simply, because pleasure and happiness accustom one to satisfaction with the things given in this world, whereas pain and suffering drive one to seek a more profound happiness beyond the limitations of this world."*

- *"...if God is dead, if there is no immortality- then this world is all there is, and this world is absurd, this world is Hell."*

- *"Such is the Nihilist universe, in which there is neither up nor down, right nor wrong, true nor false, because there is no longer any point of orientation. Where there was once God, there is now nothing..."*

- *"It is perhaps Nietzsche, that uncanny 'prophet' who knew everything about Nihilism except its ultimate meaning..."*

- *"...the Realists of the free world, who have been quite successful in transforming and 'simplifying' the Christian tradition into a system for the promotion of worldly 'progress.'"*

- *"The whole world, it almost seems, is divided into those who lead meaningless, futile lives without being aware of it, and those who, being aware of it, are driven to madness and suicide."*

- *"The Nihilist, to be sure, is in some sense "sick," and his sickness is a testimony to the sickness of an age whose best--as well as worst--elements turn to Nihilism; but sickness is not cured, nor even properly diagnosed by "sympathy."*

- *"...all truth is empirical, all truth is relative. Either statement, of course, is a self-contradiction. The first statement is itself not empirical at all, but metaphysical; the second is itself an absolute statement."*

- *"...the universality of faith, seeing it as underlying all human activity and knowledge; and we have seen that faith, if it is not to fall prey to subjective delusions, must be rooted in truth. It is therefore a legitimate, and indeed unavoidable question whether the first principles of the scientific faith--for example, the coherence and uniformity of nature, the transsubjectivity of human knowledge, the adequacy of reason to*

draw conclusions from observation--are founded in absolute truth; if they are not, they can be no more than unverifiable probabilities. The "pragmatic" position taken by many scientists and humanists who cannot be troubled to think about ultimate things--the position that these principles are no more than experimental hypotheses which collective experience finds reliable--is surely unsatisfactory; it may offer a psychological explanation of the faith these principles inspire, but since it does not establish the foundation of that faith in truth, it leaves the whole scientific edifice on shifting sands and provides no sure defense against the irrational winds that periodically attack it."

- "This ultimate truth, whether it be conceived as the Christian God or simply as the ultimate coherence of things, is a metaphysical first principle, an absolute truth. But with the acknowledgment, logically unavoidable, of such a principle, the theory of the "relativity of truth" collapses, it itself being revealed as a self-contradictory absolute."

- "No one today who prides himself on his "sophistication"--that is to say, very few in academic institutions, in government, in science, in humanist intellectual circles, no one who wishes or professes to be abreast of the "times"--does or can fully believe in absolute truth, or more particularly in Christian Truth. Yet the name of truth has been retained, as have been the names of those truths men once regarded as absolute, and few in any position of authority or influence would hesitate to use them, even when they are aware that their meanings have changed. Truth, in a word, has been "reinterpreted"; the old forms have been emptied and given a new, quasi-Nihilist content."

- "The atheist arguments against such a god are as irrefutable as they are irrelevant; for such a god is, in fact, the same as no god at all. Uninterested in man, powerless to act in the world (except to inspire a worldly "optimism"), he is a god considerably weaker than the men who invented him. On such a foundation, needless to say, nothing secure can be built; and it is with good reason that Liberals, while usually professing belief in this deity, actually build their world-view upon the more obvious, though hardly more stable, foundation of Man. Nihilist atheism is the explicit formulation of what was already, not merely implicit, but actually present in a confused form, in Liberalism."

- "In the Christian order all activity in this life is viewed and judged in the light of the life of the future world, the life beyond death which will have no end."

- "*Such a "heaven" is the fruit of a union of Christian terminology with ordinary worldliness, and it is convincing to no one who realizes that compromise in such ultimate matters is impossible; neither the true Orthodox Christian nor the consistent Nihilist is seduced by it.*" (Tillich, Vivekananda)

- "If there is no immortality, the Liberal believes, one can still lead a civilized life; "if there is no immortality"-is the far profounder logic of Ivan Karamazov in Dostoyevsky's novel-"all things are lawful." Humanist stoicism is possible for certain individuals for a certain time: until, that is, the full implications of the denial of immortality strike home. *The Liberal lives in a fool's paradise which must collapse before the truth of things. If death is, as the Liberal and Nihilist both believe, the extinction of the individual, then this world and everything in it--love, goodness, sanctity, everything--are as nothing, nothing man may do is of any ultimate*

*consequence and the full horror of life is hidden from man only by the strength of their will to deceive themselves; and "all things are lawful," no otherworldly hope or fear restrains men from monstrous experiments and suicidal dreams. Nietzsche's words are the truth-and prophecy-of the new world that results from this view."*

- "Nihilist rule--whose most fitting name, as we shall see, is Anarchy---is government established by men, and directed solely to this world, government which has no higher aim than earthly happiness." (me-contrast this with Tolstoy's views on "anarchy" sometime)

- "The Revolution, like the disbelief which has always accompanied it, cannot be stopped halfway; it is a force that, once awakened, will not rest until it ends in a totalitarian Kingdom of this world."

- "If he is not concerned to found the political and social order upon Divine Truth, if he is indifferent to the reality of Heaven and Hell, if he conceives of God as a mere idea of a vague impersonal power, it is because he is more immediately interested in worldly ends, and because everything else is vague or abstract to him."

- *"The Liberal may be interested in culture, in learning, in business, or merely in comfort; but in every one of his pursuits the dimension of the absolute is simply absent. He is unable, or unwilling, to think in terms of ends, of ultimate things. The thirst for absolute truth has vanished; it has been swallowed up in worldliness."*

- "No one has rightly sought the truth who has not encountered at the end of this search-whether to accept or reject Him-our Lord, Jesus Christ, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," Truth that stands against the world and is a reproach to all worldliness. The Liberal, who thinks his universe secure against this Truth, is the "rich man" of the parable, overburdened by his worldly interests and ideas, unwilling to give them up for the humility, poverty, and lowliness that are the marks of the genuine seeker after truth." (Socrates)

- *"It is corrupting, finally, simply to live and work in an atmosphere totally permeated by a false conception of truth, wherein Christian Truth is seen as irrelevant to the central academic concerns, wherein even those who still believe this Truth can only sporadically make their voices heard above the skepticism promoted by the academic system. The evil, of course, lies primarily in the system itself, which is founded upon untruth, and only incidentally in the many professors whom this system permits and encourages to preach it."*

- "This "Nihilist" (me- in quotes, ha! Agreed, this is not a True Nihilist, my ideas contrast with this "normal" definition of Nihilism) is the man who respects nothing, bows before no authority, accepts (so he thinks) nothing on faith, judges all in the light of a science taken as absolute and exclusive truth, rejects all idealism and abstraction in favor of the concrete and factual. He is the believer, in a word, in the "nothing-but, in the reduction of everything men have considered "higher," the things of the mind and spirit, to the lower or "basic": matter, sensation, the physical."

- "As opposed to Liberal vagueness, the Realist world-view seems perfectly clear and straightforward. In place of agnosticism or an evasive deism, there is open atheism; in place of vague "higher values," naked

materialism and self-interest.”

- “scientism” as opposed to legitimate science; for it must be understood that our remarks here are not directed against science itself, but against the improper exploitation of its standards and methods that is so common today.” (Vivekananda, Tolstoy, Underhill)

- “Is it correct to call such a philosophy Nihilism? More precisely, is it Nihilism in the sense in which we have defined that term? If truth is, in the highest sense, knowledge of the beginning and end of things, of the dimension of the absolute; and if Nihilism is the doctrine that there is no such truth; then it is clear that those who take scientific knowledge for the only truth, and deny what lies above it, are Nihilists in the exact sense of that term.”

- “All the pretended “humility” of Realist scholars and scientists, these men of little faith, cannot conceal the pride of their collective usurpation of the throne of God; they, in their smallness, think their painstaking “research” of more weight than Divine Revelation.”

- “We have failed properly to distinguish the second stage of Nihilism from its first. Most Liberals, too, accept science as exclusive truth; wherein does the Realist differ from them? The difference is not so much one of doctrine--Realism is in a sense merely disillusioned and systematized Liberalism--as one of emphasis and motivation. The Liberal is indifferent to absolute truth, an attitude resulting from excessive attachment to this world; with the Realist, on the other hand, indifference to truth becomes hostility, and mere attachment to the world becomes fanatical devotion to it.”

- “Nietzsche, most immediately, was rebelling against a Christianity that had been considerably diluted by Liberal humanism, a Christianity in which uncompromising love of and loyalty to absolute truth were rare if not entirely absent, a Christianity which had become no more than a moral idealism tinged with aesthetic sentiment.”

- “Both Christian and Realist are possessed of a love of truth, a will not to be deceived, a passion for getting to the root of things and finding their ultimate cause; both reject as unsatisfying any argument that does not refer to some absolute that itself needs no justification; both are the passionate enemies of the frivolity of a Liberalism that refuses to take ultimate things seriously and *will not see human life as the solemn undertaking that it is.*”

- “Mistaking Christianity for another form of idealism, he rejects it and becomes a fanatical devotee of the only reality that is obvious to the spiritually blind: this world. Now, much as it is possible to admire the earnestness of the devoted materialist and atheist, not even the greatest charity can induce us to recognize in him any longer the love of truth which, perhaps, first inspired him; he is the victim, rather, of a love of truth that has gone astray, become a disease, and ended in its own negation.”

- “The motives of the Realist are, in fact, not pure...he has an ulterior motive, because he places some other worldly value above truth.”

- "If the function of Liberalism was to obscure, with the smoke of "tolerance" and agnosticism, the higher truths concerning God and the spiritual life, the task of the Realism we have been examining has been to annihilate those truths...Logical Positivism." (me- Liberals are the masses of ignorant people of the consequences, Realists are people who "follow" the Christian, yet are truly unaware of the consequences of their worldview and hence put forth Earthly/Worldly ideals in place of Other, Absolute...)

- "Typical of the Vitalist attitude in this regard is the lament of W. B. Yeats in his autobiography over "being deprived by Huxley and Tyndall, whom I detested, of the simpleminded religion of my childhood...." (people want simple salvation, Tolstoy, Vivekananda, 'religion is just what they are already doing')

- "most of what passes for "spirituality" today is in fact a "new spirituality," a cancer born of Nihilism that attaches itself to healthy organisms to destroy them from within. This tactic is the precise opposite of the bold Realist attack upon truth and the spiritual life; but it is no less a Nihilist tactic, and a more advanced one. Intellectually, then, Vitalism presupposes a rejection of Christian Truth together with a certain pseudo-spiritual pretension."

- "There are, of course, other less violent forms of the popular unrest. There is the passion for movement and speed, expressed especially in the veritable cult of the automobile (we have already noted this passion in Hitler); the universal appeal of television and cinema, whose most frequent function is to provide a few hours of escape from reality, both by their eclectic and "exciting" subject-matter and by the hypnotic effect of the media themselves; the increasingly primitive and savage character of popular music and of the perhaps more authentic expression of the contemporary soul, "jazz", the cult of physical prowess in sport, and the morbid worship of "youth."

- "In such phenomena "activity" is clearly an escape--an escape from boredom, from meaninglessness, and most profoundly from the emptiness that takes possession of the heart that has abandoned God) Revealed Truth, and the morality and conscience dependent upon that Truth."

- "Religious Vitalism appears also in the widespread cult of "awareness" and "realization." In a fairly restrained form this is present in the devotees of modern art and the "creative act" and "vision" that inspire this art. The indiscriminate quest for "enlightenment," as in those under the influence of Zen Buddhism, is a more extreme form of this cult; and the supposed "religious experience" stimulated by various drugs is, perhaps, its *reductio ad absurdum*." (I disagree, these experiences may not 'be God', but they are steps [symbolism] on the latter to God)

- "We have delineated the most striking features of Vitalism and given some suggestion of its extent; but we have yet to define the term itself and expose its Nihilist character. Liberalism, as we have seen, undermined truth by indifference to it, retaining however the prestige of its name; and Realism attacked it in the name of a lesser, partial truth. Vitalism, as opposed to both of these, has no relation to truth whatever; it simply devotes its whole concern to something of an entirely different order."

- "But perhaps most revealing of the infection of humanism by Vitalism is the strange axiom, romantic and skeptical at the same time, that the "love of truth" is never-ending because it can never be fulfilled, that the whole of life is a constant search for something there is no hope of finding, a constant movement that never can--nor should--know a place of rest. The sophisticated humanist can be very eloquent in describing this, the new first principle of scholarly and scientific research, as an acknowledgment of the "provisional" nature of all knowledge, as a reflection of the never-satisfied, ever-curious human mind, or as part of the mysterious process of "evolution" or "progress"; but the significance of the attitude is dear. It is the last attempt of the unbeliever to hide his abandonment of truth behind a cloud of noble rhetoric."

- "Who wishes to be creative," said Nietzsche, "Must first destroy and smash accepted values."  
(Nihiltheism says you *must* smash accepted values, since they will all be incorrect! This is *not* utter destruction, it is a smashing of positive values and replacing them with negative notions of morality)

- "God is dead in the hearts of modern man: this is what the "death of God" means, and it is as true of the atheists and Satanists who rejoice in the fact, as it is of the unsophisticated multitudes in whom the sense of the spiritual reality has simply disappeared. Man has lost faith in God and in the Divine Truth that once sustained him; the apostasy to worldliness that has characterized the modern age since its beginning becomes, in Nietzsche, conscious of itself and finds words to express itself. "God is dead": that is to say, "we have lost our faith in God"; "there is no truth": that is to say, "we have become uncertain of everything divine and absolute."

- "In this abyss, this nothingness of the man who lives without truth, we come to the very heart of Nihilism."

- *"This "anxiety" and this "abyss" are precisely the nothingness out of which God has called each man into being, and back to which man seems to fall when he denies God, and in consequence, denies his own creation and his own being."*

- *"Can this be?--an order founded upon nothing? Of course it cannot; it is self-contradiction, it is suicide."*

- *No man, we have said often enough, lives without a god; who then--or what--is the god of the Nihilist? It is nihil, nothingness itself--not the nothingness of absence or non-existence, but of apostasy and denial; it is the "corpse" of the "dead God" which so weighs upon the Nihilist."*

- "For if nothingness be the center of the world, then the world, both in its essence and in every detail, is incoherent, it fails to hold together, it is absurd."

- "We have killed him (God), you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it move now? Wither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above

and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker."

- "...everywhere men feverishly pursue the work of "progress"--for what reason they do not know, or only very dimly sense. In the free world it is perhaps a horror vacui that chiefly impels men into feverish activity that promises forgetfulness of the spiritual emptiness that attends all worldliness."

- "In the Nihilist "new earth" all human energy is to be devoted to worldly concerns; the whole human environment and every object in it are to serve the cause of "production" and to remind men that their only happiness lies in this world; there is to be established, in fact, the absolute despotism of worldliness."

- *"Communist doctrine affirms...the systematized absurdity of a perfectly efficient machine that has no ultimate purpose."* (Ha!)

- *"Nihilism is, most profoundly, a spiritual disorder, and it can be overcome only by spiritual means; and there has been no attempt whatever in the contemporary world to apply such means."* (this is why I feel a strange need to write or tell someone something. I am too dumb. I am not worth anything. I do not have anything to give. I am unworthy of anything. Your happiness is obviously the most important thing, not mine. Your life's work can be ignored, laughed at, mocked after your death. You spent your life for these reactions? You lived for what? Why are you living?)

*Seeking the realization of Christian "ideals" in this world is idolatry; it is of the Antichrist -A Letter to Thomas Merton*

- "I personally think that "total peace" is, at bottom, a utopian ideal; but the very fact that it seems practical today raises a profounder question." (Earthly/Other distinction, the impossibility of 'helping' others, Vivekananda)

- "You speak of "Christian action," "the Christian who manifests the truth of the Gospel in social action," "not only in prayer and penance, but also in his political commitments and in all his social responsibilities." Well, I certainly will say nothing against that; if Christian truth does not shine through in all that one does, to that extent one is failing to be a Christian, and if one is called to a political vocation, one's action in that area too must be Christian. But, if I am not mistaken, your words imply something more than that; namely, that now more than ever before we need Christians working in the social and

political sphere, to realize there the truth of the Gospel. But *why*, if Christ's Kingdom is *not of this world*? Is there really a Christian "social message," or is not that rather a result of *the one Christian activity—working out one's salvation with diligence*? I by no means advocate a practice of Christianity in isolation; all Christianity—even that of the hermit—is a "social Christianity," but that is only as *context*, not as *end*. The Church is in society because men are in society, but the end of the Church is the transformation of *men*, not society. It is a good thing if a society and government profess genuine Christianity, if its institutions are informed by Christianity, because an example is given thereby to the men who are a part of that society; but a Christian society is not an end in itself, but simply a result of the fact that Christian men live in society."

- "When I feed my hungry brother, this is a Christian act and a preaching of the Kingdom that needs no words; it is done for the personal reason that my brother—he who stands before me at this moment—is hungry, and it is a Christian act because my brother is, in some sense, Christ. *But if I generalize from this case and embark on a political crusade to abolish the "evil of hunger," that is something entirely different; though individuals who participate in such a crusade may act in a perfectly Christian way, the whole project—and precisely because it is a "project," a thing of human planning—has become wrapped in a kind of cloak of "idealism."* (Karma Yoga is needed)

- "...let me before I call it a Christian act—carefully ask myself whether its end is merely a lofty worldly ideal, or something greater." (Vivekananda, Karma Yoga)

- "...there is nothing intrinsically evil about any of these "crusades," and there are involved in them all quite sincere and fervent Christians who are really preaching the Gospel; but, as I say, there is a kind of cloak of "idealism" wrapped about them all, a cloak that seems to be drawing them into its own quite independent service." (speaking of Charities and other 'actions')

- "...people both inside and outside these movements, both inside and outside the Church, is precisely to place emphasis upon the realization of outward ideals, thus obscuring inward truth...How many of those indeed, even Catholic and Orthodox, who are participating in the world of "social Christianity" today, do not believe that this is really a more "perfect" and even "inward" Christianity than a dogmatic, ascetic, and contemplative Christianity that doesn't get such obvious 'results'?"

- "First and foremost I radically question the emphasis upon "action" itself, upon "projects" and "planning," upon concern with the "social" and what man can do about it—all of which acts to the detriment of acceptance of the given, of what God gives us at this moment, as well as of allowing His will to be done, not ours." (building hospitals and bridges? Ha!, says Vivekananda)

- "I think the central need of our time is not in the least different from what it has always been since Christ came; it lies, *not in the area of "political commitments" and "social responsibilities," but precisely in "prayer and penance" and fasting and preaching of the true Kingdom*. The only "social responsibility" of a Christian is to live, wherever and with whomever he may be, the life of faith, for his own salvation and as an example to others. *If, in so doing, we help to ameliorate or abolish a social evil, that is a good thing—but that is not our goal*. If



we become desperate when our life and our words fail to convert others to the true Kingdom, that comes from lack of faith. If we would live our faith more deeply, we would need to speak of it less."

- "...a "new Christianity," a Christianity that claims to be "inward," but is entirely too concerned with outward result; a Christianity, even, that cannot really believe in "peace" and "brotherhood" unless it sees them generalized and universally applied, not in some seemingly remote "other world," but "here and now...nothing done in Christ is done for oneself alone—but not enough for what? The answer to that, I think, is clear: for *the transformation of the world*, the definitive "realization" of Christianity in the social and political order...The Kingdom is *not of this world*; to think or hope that Christianity can be outwardly "successful" in the world is a denial of all that Christ and His prophets have said of the future of the Church. Christianity can be "successful" on one condition: that of renouncing (or conveniently forgetting) the true Kingdom and seeking to build up a Kingdom in the world. The "Earthly Kingdom" is precisely the goal of the modern mentality; the building of it is the meaning of the modern age. It is not Christian; as Christians, we know whose Kingdom it is. And what so greatly troubles me is that today Christians—Catholic and Orthodox alike—are themselves joining, often quite unaware of the fact, often with the best possible intentions, in the building of this new Babel..." (Ha! Not too many people use sarcasm)

- "Everywhere "prophets"—semi- or pseudo-Christians like Berdyaev and Tolstoy..." (I see this distinction with Tolstoy as well. as much as Tolstoy is like Rose and myself, I agree, he is too Worldly)

- "Above all, the Christian in the contemporary world must show his brothers that all the "problems of the age" are of no consequence beside the single central "problem of man": death, and its answer, Christ. Despite what you have said about the "staleness" of Christianity to contemporary men, I think that Christians who speak of this problem, and in their lives show that they *actually believe* all that "superstition" about the "other world"—I think they have something "new" to say to contemporary man. It has been my own experience that serious young people are "tired" of Christianity precisely because they think it is an "idealism" that hypocritically doesn't live up to its "ideals"; of course, they don't believe in the other world either—but for all they know, *neither do "Christians."*

- "Particularly all the involvement of Christians in the projects of social idealism, seems to me a way of saying: "You, the worldly, are right. Our Kingdom 'not of this world' is so distant and we can't seem to get it across to you; so we will join you in building something we can actually see, something better than Christ and His Kingdom—a reign of peace, justice, brotherhood on earth." This is a "new Christianity," a refinement, it seems to me, of the Christianity of the "Grand Inquisitor" of Dostoyevsky."

- "What is needed is not more busyness but a deeper penetration within. Not less fasting, but more; not more action, but prayer and penance. If Christians really lived the Christian hope and the full path of unification that looks to its fulfillment, instead of the easy compromise that most laymen today think sufficient—and doesn't the "new Christianity" tell them that working for social ideals is really more important than following the Christian discipline?—; if Christians in their daily life were really on fire with love of God and zeal for His Kingdom *not of this world*—then everything else needful would follow of itself."

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