

Spiritual Guide

*That frees the soul and leads it along the inner path to
achieve perfect contemplation and the precious treasure of
inner peace*

By Doctor Miguel de Molinos, Priest

Published by the Reverend Father Fray Juan de Santa María,
Provincial Minister of the Province of San Pedro de Alcántara
of the Kingdom of Naples,
of the Order of Friars Minor of Saint Francis

In Rome,
By Miguel Hércules. The year 1675.

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PROLOGUE

Perhaps the first thing I should explain is the reasoning that has led me to undertake this work, which contains a modern Spanish translation of Miguel de Molinos's *Spiritual Guide* along with extensive commentary on each of its chapters. What initially struck me upon reading it was the author's depth and insight in describing the mental states that everyone encounters on the spiritual path, identifying challenges, and offering solutions, techniques, and methods for managing a mind that has set the lofty goal of reaching God.

You and I, dear reader, belong to a cultural context very different from that of Molinos, and yet our minds are no different from his; they operate in the same way and face identical challenges when they embark on the path of mysticism.

In my view, Molinos was a great spiritual teacher, and he has much to teach us. However, it's evident that his teachings must be translated and adapted to our cultural context, or they risk being dismissed, depriving us of the opportunity to benefit from all the good they contain. This is why I have undertaken a critical reading of his work, which I hope you will find useful.

Miguel de Molinos, an enigmatic figure of the seventeenth century, invites us into the mysterious and profound path of inner contemplation. Born in 1628 in Muniesa, a small village in Aragon, Spain, Molinos studied theology in Valencia, where he also served as a priest. His education in Valencia was rigorous and thorough, excelling in scholastic philosophy and theology, which provided him with a solid intellectual foundation for his later spiritual teachings. During his time in Valencia, Molinos was highly regarded for his skill as a spiritual counselor, guiding those who sought to deepen their inner lives.

After his success in Valencia, Molinos moved to Rome, where he gained popularity as a spiritual director. There, Molinos associated with prominent figures in the clergy and found an environment where his mystical message could resonate among those seeking a deeper and more authentic spiritual life. It was in Rome that he began to consolidate his philosophy of stillness and surrender, moving away from external practices and rituals and focusing on the soul's direct experience with the divine. His most well-known work, *Spiritual Guide*, published in 1675, quickly became a key reference in Christian mysticism, though it also sparked controversy.

The popularity of the *Spiritual Guide* attracted both fervent followers and critics. Molinos advocated for an inner spirituality, focused on stillness and total surrender to God, which clashed with traditional ecclesiastical structures that emphasized external practices and sacraments. This radical stance in favor of pure contemplation led influential sectors within the Catholic Church to view him with suspicion. Molinos's detractors, including conservative theologians and members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, feared that his message would undermine the Church's authority and promote a type of spirituality that did not require institutional mediation. Some even saw his teachings as a direct attack on the foundations of the Church, as they diminished the importance of sacraments, penance, and obedience to ecclesiastical leaders.

Among his most vehement critics was the Jesuit Paolo Segneri, an influential preacher who publicly opposed Molinos's ideas, accusing him of heresy and leading the faithful down a path of spiritual apathy. Segneri and other detractors argued that Molinos's focus on spiritual passivity could lead to a dangerous indifference toward religious and moral obligations. This opposition grew rapidly, gaining the support of powerful members of the Church who saw quietism as a threat to doctrinal control and ecclesiastical order.

In 1685, Molinos was formally accused of heresy. The Inquisition began a meticulous and prolonged inquisitorial process against him, which culminated in his arrest in 1687. During the interrogations, Molinos was pressured to renounce his teachings, which were deemed dangerous and heretical. His writings were carefully examined, and he was accused of promoting "quietism," a doctrine his critics claimed fostered spiritual passivity and minimized the importance of sacraments and good deeds. Despite the pressures, Molinos remained steadfast in many of his principles, though ultimately, under threat of harsher reprisals, he was forced to publicly recant. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, spending the rest of his days in prison, where he continued to defend his beliefs in silence until his death in 1696.

From my experience as a scholar and commentator on the works of Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross—whose writings I have also edited and published with in-depth exegesis—I remain struck by the contrast between their canonization and the condemnation of Molinos. All three share a profoundly interior vision of spiritual life, centered on surrender, the annihilation of the ego, and direct union with God. Yet, while Teresa and John were proclaimed saints and Doctors of the Church, Molinos was persecuted and silenced. This paradox invites a critical reflection on the limits that institutions impose on spiritual freedom, and on how

historical, political, and theological contexts can lead to the condemnation of teachings that, in a different setting, might have been revered.

It is not difficult to find reasons that help explain such divergent outcomes. Teresa and John lived in the sixteenth century, a time when the Catholic Reformation promoted by the Council of Trent sought not only to combat Protestant heresy but also to renew and deepen spiritual life within Catholicism. In that context, the intense and radically interior spirituality of these mystics was welcomed as a testimony of holiness that reinforced, rather than questioned, the authority of the Church. Both were obedient to their superiors, skillful in their manner of writing—especially Teresa, who knew how to temper her mystical boldness with gestures of humility and submission—and they died within a Church that had not yet entirely closed its doors to the great inspired voices that overflowed doctrinal boundaries without breaking them.

Molinos, by contrast, emerged in the late seventeenth century, when the ecclesial climate had become much more rigid and defensive. After facing the fractures caused by Protestantism, the Church had grown increasingly wary of any form of religious experience that might challenge clerical authority, the efficacy of the sacraments, or the importance of good works. In that context, Molinos's approach—though not essentially different from the *via negativa* of John or the radical surrender of Teresa—was perceived as a threat. The fact that his teachings spread among both laypeople and clergy without the need for priestly guidance, and that his influence grew particularly in Enlightenment circles or among those critical of ecclesiastical power, ultimately sealed his fate.

One must also consider a more subtle, yet no less important factor: personal charisma and the subsequent narrative. Teresa and John left behind a legacy enshrouded in a halo of sanctity, which was carefully preserved, safeguarded, and promoted by their respective religious orders. Molinos, on the other hand, was abandoned after his condemnation, his figure faded, and his memory tied to a pejorative label: “quietism.” History is written by those who triumph, or at the very least, by those who survive with institutional voice. And Molinos was silenced before he could construct a narrative capable of withstanding his condemnation.

For all these reasons, returning to his work confronts us not only with a spiritual gem unjustly consigned to obscurity, but also with an opportunity to reconsider the historical mechanisms that determine which voices are elevated as orthodox and which are buried under the weight of suspicion.

Despite the persecution, Molinos's ideas managed to exert a notable influence both in his time and in the following centuries. During the seventeenth century, his teachings resonated among followers in Italy, Spain, and France, particularly among those seeking a more intimate and less ritualistic experience of spirituality. The quietist movement spread despite ecclesiastical condemnations, inspiring mystics and spiritual seekers who saw in Molinos's work a gateway to a more direct and personal relationship with God.

Molinos's influence can also be understood in the context of other contemporary thinkers. Notably, parallels can be drawn between Molinos's ideas and those of Jean-Jacques Olier, founder of the Society of Saint-Sulpice, who also sought a deeper experience of faith through inner prayer and detachment from external ritual practices. While Olier stayed within the acceptable bounds for the Church of his time, he shared with Molinos the belief in the importance of the inner life. Similarly, Madame Guyon, a French mystic and prominent exponent of quietism, was deeply influenced by Molinos's ideas. Guyon also faced persecution for her teachings, which, like those of Molinos, promoted a direct union with God without clerical mediation.

Another thinker who can be associated with Molinos is Blaise Pascal, the renowned French mathematician and philosopher. Though Pascal was not a mystic in the strictest sense, he shared the view that a relationship with God should be based on total surrender and profound faith, moving away from the formalism and rationalism that characterized many of his contemporaries. Pascal's writings on humility and humanity's insignificance before divine greatness bear some similarity to the radical surrender Molinos advocated. Both rejected intellectual pride and embraced a more authentic and humble spirituality.

Molinos's contemplative techniques also share remarkable similarities with some Eastern practices. For instance, Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, aligns with Molinos in seeking direct union with the divine through the detachment from the ego and deep meditation. Sufis practice *dhikr*, the constant repetition of God's name, as a way of achieving a state of stillness and spiritual connection, similar to the inner abandonment Molinos proposed. Both traditions emphasize total surrender to the divine will and the direct experience of the sacred, leaving aside more formal structures and rituals.

In Hinduism, the practice of *jñāna yoga* also resonates with Molinos's philosophy of stillness. *Jñāna yoga* focuses on inner knowledge and the dissolution of the ego through introspection and contemplation, fundamental elements in Molinos's teachings. Like Molinos, practitioners of *jñāna yoga* seek to transcend the individual

self to experience unity with divine reality. The notion of detachment from desires and surrender to a higher reality is a common thread between both traditions.

In Buddhism, especially in Zen, we find another significant similarity. Zen meditation (*zazen*) emphasizes simply being, observing without judgment, and emptying the mind—concepts close to Molinos’s ideal of stillness and surrender. Zen practice aims to transcend rational thought and reach a state of pure presence, something also implicit in Molinos’s work, where he urged followers to suspend judgment and expectations to achieve union with God.

In Tibetan Buddhism, the practice of *mahamudra*, involving recognition of the mind’s nature and surrender to the direct experience of the present, also echoes Molinos’s philosophy. The idea of letting go of all intention and simply experiencing reality without attachments is a shared aspect of both teachings. This unconditional surrender, in which the ego’s control is renounced, is a common core in both *mahamudra* and Molinos’s teachings.

In the centuries that followed, Molinos’s influence remained subtle but persistent. His thought influenced later spiritual renewal movements advocating a direct connection with the divine, such as Pietism and, to a lesser extent, Methodism. Even in the twentieth century, Molinos’s teachings resonated with writers and theologians interested in mysticism and inner spirituality, like Thomas Merton, who recognized the importance of contemplation and total surrender as a path to inner transformation.

Likewise, Molinos’s work can be seen as a precursor to certain modern approaches to spirituality that value silence, meditation, and the search for a direct connection with the inner self. Although the Church officially condemned quietism, many elements of his philosophy found their place in the mainstream of contemporary Christian spirituality, especially in contemplative and meditative practices that remain relevant today.

His teachings, often misunderstood and even persecuted, contain essential wisdom for those seeking a genuine connection with the divine. In a world dominated by noise and distraction, Molinos’s voice rises as a serene whisper, reminding us of the importance of inner stillness and silence.

It is worth noting that the Catholic Church, as an institution, maintains a critical stance toward Miguel de Molinos due to his association with quietism. In 1687, Pope Innocent XI condemned 68 propositions from Molinos’s teachings in the bull *Coelestis Pastor*, declaring them heretical and erroneous. Since then, the Church has considered his teachings doctrinal deviations.

Although some contemporary scholars have reassessed Molinos's legacy, recognizing his influence on mystical spirituality, the official position of the Catholic Church remains unchanged. His doctrines are still viewed as incompatible with Catholic orthodoxy, and his figure is associated with teachings that the Church deems erroneous.

To this day, the Catholic Church has not issued an official apology or acknowledged any error in the life sentence, torture, and imprisonment of Miguel de Molinos.

The work you hold in your hands is a guide to that inner space of peace, an invitation to suspend judgment and expectations and simply be. Through his words, Molinos urges us to relinquish the ego and surrender to the divine will, a radical act of humility that challenges our modern understanding of autonomy and control. In his teachings, we hear echoes of other great spiritual traditions, but also a unique voice that embraces the paradox of surrender: losing oneself to find oneself.

This translation seeks to capture the essence of Molinos's prose, adapting it to contemporary language without losing its original mystical depth. I have also included complementary notes that provide historical and psychological context, aiding readers in grasping concepts that, though universal, may seem remote to the twenty-first-century mindset.

Readers may be surprised to find that in this *Spiritual Guide*, the author addresses the reader using the feminine form—a nuance more evident in the original Spanish, where grammatical gender is explicit. This stylistic choice follows a long-standing tradition in Christian mysticism that personifies the soul as feminine in its relationship with God, the divine Bridegroom. Rooted in the symbolism of the *Song of Songs* and echoed throughout mystical literature, this feminine representation highlights the soul's posture of receptivity, surrender, and longing for union with the divine. Though less apparent in English, this convention underscores the contemplative dynamic of love and desire that lies at the heart of Molinos's spiritual teaching.

The commentary on each chapter of this work is primarily pedagogical. Its purpose is to clarify and reinforce the key ideas presented, giving the reader a second opportunity to reflect on and absorb them; the repetitive nature of this is intentional. Each chapter's main ideas are reiterated in the commentary to give the reader a chance to engage with them twice. These comments also provide historical context, explaining the influences and environment in which Molinos's teachings were conceived, facilitating a deeper understanding. Furthermore, they include references to other authors and spiritual traditions, establishing connections that enrich the

reader's perspective and highlight the universality of certain mystical experiences. Each commentary thus not only guides the interpretation of the text but also invites a dialogue with other spiritual currents and viewpoints, broadening the horizon and offering a reflective, well-grounded reading.

In this edition of Miguel de Molinos's *Spiritual Guide*, I have incorporated numerous comments based on *A Course in Miracles*, a system of thought to which I have dedicated decades of study and practice. All citations of *A Course in Miracles* included in this work come from my own translation of the Course, ensuring coherence and fidelity in interpreting its teachings.

I hope that this modernized version will allow today's readers to fully immerse themselves in Miguel de Molinos's teachings, appreciating both their simplicity and their profundity. May this work be, for each one, an open door to contemplation and the inner peace we so desperately seek in our modern age.

MOLINOS & NORIEGA

Over the centuries, *The Spiritual Guide* by Miguel de Molinos has stirred both passions and controversies. Written in the seventeenth century, this work reveals a radical vision of Christianity that shook the foundations of orthodox thought of its time and, even today, confronts us with questions and dilemmas that transcend history. In 1977, Santiago González Noriega offered a profound critique of this work, serving not only as a scholarly commentary but also as a bridge between contemporary readers and Molinos's complex inner world. In his prologue, Noriega addresses Molinos's principal ideas, highlighting the two paths of Christianity and the radical proposition of quietism as an extreme experience of faith. I found Noriega's contribution intriguing, and I have included his perspective in this work to guide our exploration and analysis.

The Duality of Paths in Christianity

Santiago González Noriega begins his analysis by describing two possible paths within Christianity: the external and the internal. The external path, represented by theology, seeks to know God through His works, through nature, and the symbols that the Church offers to the faithful. It is a path where ecclesiastical teachings and the community of believers play an essential role, seeking cohesion and certainty. Conversely, there is the internal path: mysticism. This path is intimate, subjective, and personal. For mystics, the relationship with God is a direct experience, a search for union that often defies words. Instead of rational arguments, mysticism offers a knowledge that can scarcely be shared and often challenges conventional logic.

González Noriega underscores how Molinos firmly situates himself within this second path, presenting us with a radically private experience of faith that shuns speculative intervention. This stance inevitably led to a clash with orthodoxy, which, according to Noriega, saw in Molinos's work a threat to the institutional coherence and spiritual stability of the average believer.

The Dialectic of Two Wills: Renouncing the Self

A crucial point in Noriega's critique is his exploration of the "dialectic of two wills" proposed by Molinos. Here, the human will is set against the divine will. For Molinos, the soul's true freedom is attained by annihilating one's own will, allowing only God's will to guide all human actions. This absolute submission implies the ultimate

renunciation: human beings must set aside everything that makes them independent and surrender entirely to the divine will.

Noriega highlights how this approach is deeply subversive. In an era when the Church proclaimed the value of personal will and responsibility in salvation, Molinos invited the mystic to disappear, to merge their "self" into the divine totality. According to Noriega, this perspective is challenging because it presents a form of Christianity that leaves little room for reason or personal action—a sharp contrast to the speculative tradition that had characterized theology for centuries.

The Soul's Relationship with the Other: God in Silence

In the second part of his prologue, Noriega delves into the relationship between the soul and "the Other," that is, God. This relationship is characterized by the paradox of God's presence in the soul in the form of absence and silence. Molinos describes a union that cannot be sensed but is only understood through faith. According to Noriega, Molinos's proposal is extremely radical: God is present in the soul but in a way that cannot be seen or felt. Communication between the soul and God is a "silent dialogue," where God's responses are manifested in silence, and the soul must learn to recognize this wordless response.

Noriega notes that this aspect of Molinos's thought stands in stark contrast to traditional theology and popular religiosity, which seek tangible signs and clear answers. For Molinos, silence is the clearest proof of divine presence, and the absence of sensory certainty defines the true act of faith. Noriega suggests that this is a courageous and profound vision, but also one that is extremely difficult for most believers to accept, as it requires living with uncertainty and trusting fully in the invisible.

Dualism and Non-Dualism: A Clash of Perspectives

As González Noriega suggests, what is at stake in Molinos's work is not just a radical approach to mysticism, but also a deeper philosophical tension between dualism and non-dualism. While the Church's traditional stance and theology are fundamentally dualistic—that is, they recognize a clear separation between the human and the divine, as well as between the soul and the material world—Molinos adopts a more non-dualistic perspective that permeates his *Spiritual Guide*.

Non-dualism posits that, ultimately, no real divisions exist between the individual being and the divine totality. Molinos holds that both the world and the individual's "self" are illusory and lack true substance in the face of the absolute reality of God. For this reason, Molinos's disdain for the world and for the self-seeking union with God is nothing more than a rejection of what is ephemeral and unreal. To him,

the material world and personal identity are barriers that must be transcended, as they prevent the soul from reaching the essence of the divine, the only true reality.

Historically, this non-dualistic perspective can also be observed in other mystical and philosophical traditions. For example, in Eastern philosophy, we find proponents of non-dualism in Advaita Vedanta in India, especially in the figure of Adi Shankara, who argued that the individual self is an illusion and that only unity with Brahman, the absolute principle, constitutes ultimate truth. Similarly, in Zen Buddhism, the transcendence of the duality between self and the universe is emphasized, promoting the dissolution of the ego to reach enlightenment. In Western mysticism, thinkers like Meister Eckhart also touched upon non-dualism by speaking of the need to “leave God for God,” referring to transcending the dualistic conception of God as a being separate from humanity.

In this sense, Molinos aligns with this non-dualistic tradition, though in a profoundly Christian and, at the same time, controversial way. His denial of personal will and the value of the world is, according to Noriega, an expression of this vision that views all earthly manifestations as shadows of a deeper, ineffable reality. Molinos’s proposal invites readers to shed the illusion of duality, to transcend the division between the soul and God, and to find truth in the annihilation of the self. Here lies, perhaps, the greatest challenge of Molinos’s work: his call for the disappearance of the ego as a means to reach ultimate truth.

Humiliation and Guilt: The Soul’s Relationship with God

Another fundamental point that Noriega addresses is the concept of humiliation in the soul’s relationship with God. For Molinos, humiliation is a way to keep alive an awareness of one’s own unworthiness before divine infinitude. The soul must remain conscious of its smallness and misery before God, and this constant act of humiliation is what maintains the necessary distance between humanity and the Creator.

Santiago González Noriega emphasizes how this view renders the relationship with God profoundly asymmetrical, where the soul can never expect to be worthy of God. This feeling of perpetual guilt and humiliation produces a pessimistic view of humanity, in which salvation seems to depend on the complete annihilation of any personal will or desire. Noriega points out that, unlike other mystics such as St. John of the Cross, for whom union with God is an ever-deepening act of love, in Molinos, this union is reduced to constant humiliation, a perpetual renunciation of the “self” that leaves little room for true joy.

Quietism: Renunciation of Earthly Life

Finally, Noriega examines Molinos's stance toward earthly life. Molinos's quietism implies a total renunciation of any intervention in the world, an absolute surrender to divine will without attempting to modify or engage with reality. Molinos advocates for an extreme passivity, a sort of "living death" where the mystic awaits physical death as the moment they can finally unite with God.

For Noriega, this stance is profoundly problematic. Earthly life, as described by Molinos, becomes a mere waiting period, a passive anticipation of death that leaves the mystic isolated and without purpose within the community of the faithful. Noriega sees in this renunciation of action a self-destructive element that denies the value of human existence in the world and reduces the person to a "living corpse," devoid of will or desire.

Conclusion: A Radical and Challenging Vision

In his critique, Santiago González Noriega offers not only an analysis of Miguel de Molinos's ideas but also invites us to reflect on the limits and possibilities of spiritual experience. The *Spiritual Guide* is a profoundly challenging work that questions many established beliefs about faith, freedom, and our relationship with God. According to Noriega, Molinos's proposal presents a form of Christianity taken to the extreme, where the annihilation of the "self" becomes the only possible path to union with the divine.

Noriega reminds us that this is a path few are willing to tread, as it demands total renunciation, not only of the world but also of one's own identity and desires. However, within this extreme vision lies a courage and coherence that is undeniably fascinating and continues to attract those seeking a radically pure experience of faith.

Through this prologue, Santiago González Noriega successfully bridges the voice of Molinos with modern readers, helping us better understand the dilemmas and teachings of this complex work. Thanks to Noriega's insight, *The Spiritual Guide* remains a challenge to our understanding of the world and our relationship with the divine. With his accessible and thoughtful style, Noriega invites us to approach Molinos with an open mind, ready to question—and perhaps to be challenged.

MOLINOS & ACIM

Reflecting on the similarities and differences between *The Spiritual Guide* by Miguel de Molinos and *A Course in Miracles* opens a fascinating space for understanding two mystical approaches that, despite their temporal distance and religious contexts, share a journey toward inner peace and total surrender, albeit from different principles and methodologies.

Rooted in the seventeenth-century Christian context, *The Spiritual Guide* advocates a contemplative spirituality of complete surrender, a quietism that, according to Molinos, “liberates the soul and leads it along the inner path to attain perfect contemplation and the priceless treasure of inner peace.” His message is clear: renounce the ego and all personal will to let God act within the soul. Molinos emphasizes the concept of “quietude,” a state in which the soul makes no effort on its own but instead allows itself to be carried by God. In his quietism, the abandonment of personal will is the means to achieve deep union with God. In this way, peace is understood as coming from the cessation of resistance and from any attachment to human effort.

In contrast, *A Course in Miracles*, developed in the twentieth century, guides the spiritual seeker through a psychological and metaphysical framework that challenges one to unlearn what the ego has taught, to embrace one’s true identity in divine love. While Molinos promotes spiritual passivity before God, the Course advocates active participation—yet in the sense of undoing the internal barriers to love. Here, the Course teaches that problems and negative perceptions are constructs of the ego to be unlearned: “Nothing I see means anything” (L-1:1) is the Course’s first lesson, directly confronting the meanings we assign to our reality and emphasizing that only by undoing our egoic interpretations can peace truly arrive.

Miguel de Molinos invites us to the experience of inner quiet and total surrender to God. His approach is based on the renunciation of external practices and rituals, seeking a pure form of communion with the divine. In this context, Molinos asserts that “the soul should not concern itself with external distractions but should surrender entirely into the arms of God,” thus highlighting surrender and passivity as pathways to true union with the divine.

A notable similarity between the two works is their view of the ego as the principal obstacle to experiencing truth and peace. Molinos identifies the ego as a barrier to total surrender to God, suggesting that any form of control or conscious effort is an impediment to divine grace: “For God to work within the soul, the ego must be

nullified.” This perspective strongly resonates with *A Course in Miracles*, where the ego is described as the creator of all illusions, suffering, and fear. “The ego is the voice of fear,” the Course tells us, emphasizing that peace comes from recognizing and letting go of the ego’s illusions. Moreover, the Course adds that the ego within us constantly projects to keep us in a state of separation: “Projection ALWAYS hurts you. It reinforces your belief in your own split mind, and its only purpose is TO KEEP THE SEPARATION GOING” (T-6.II.4:1-2).

There are, however, significant differences in tone and approach. *The Spiritual Guide* is steeped in austerity and severity, reflecting the seventeenth-century context and Molinos’s personal experience with ecclesiastical authorities. The quest for divine union is presented as a difficult and often painful process, where the soul must endure moments of “darkness” and trial, confronting its own miseries and renouncing all forms of control. Molinos emphasizes suffering as a path to purification: “The soul must learn to endure desolations without seeking comfort in worldly things.” According to Molinos, “suffering is the crucible in which the soul is purified,” underscoring the value of suffering as a tool for spiritual perfection.

In contrast, *A Course in Miracles* adopts a more compassionate and less penitential tone. Although it also addresses the need to transcend the ego and its illusions, it does so through the concepts of forgiveness and unconditional love. Rather than suffering as a means of purification, the Course proposes that healing comes from a change in perception and that forgiveness is the means to remember that we are all one and have never been separate from God. This difference reflects a shift in modern spirituality, which tends to avoid the notion of necessary suffering and instead emphasizes the possibility of peaceful, loving transformation, as the Course repeatedly asserts that suffering has no place in God’s plan for us.

A fundamental distinction in *A Course in Miracles* is its deep relational approach, contrasting strongly with the solitary path proposed by Molinos. In the Course, relationships with others become the means to achieve salvation: “Your brother is the mirror in which you see the image of yourself as long as perception lasts” (T-7.VII.4:10), suggesting that redemption is not reached in isolation but through forgiveness and unity with others. This relational aspect is evident when the Course states that your brother “is your savior, NOT your enemy” (T-29.V.6:1) and that “you tried to see your sins in him to save yourself” (T-22.IV.8:6). This marks a significant difference from *The Spiritual Guide*, where the quest for inner peace is largely individual and does not require mediation through others.

Both works agree that true inner peace comes from liberation from the ego and detachment from worldly things. However, in *The Spiritual Guide*, this peace is

achieved through an almost complete renunciation of personal action: Molinos asks his followers to surrender silently to God's will, without intervening or resisting, allowing Him to work within their souls. *A Course in Miracles*, on the other hand, invites active introspection and perception correction as a way to undo fear, guiding the student to a peace that depends on acknowledging their own responsibility in constructing their reality. Thus, the Course maintains that fear is a misperception, "a call for love" (T-12.III), and that healing requires recognizing this perceptual error and allowing the Holy Spirit to reinterpret fear as love. The Course further reminds us that all conflict stems from the belief that we are separated from God.

The role of suffering and guilt is also a significant difference between the two teachings. Molinos views suffering and spiritual trial as a purifying path toward God, accepting difficulty as a necessary step toward quietude and contemplative peace—a "fire that purifies" and should be accepted in silence. However, *A Course in Miracles* asserts that guilt and suffering are illusory, produced by the ego to keep us trapped in pain. True liberation, according to the Course, comes from "the release from guilt" and the recognition of inherent innocence in each being, as this release allows love to replace fear. As the Course states, "guilt is insanity, completely unjustified..." (T-13.XI.8:6).

The course of action also differs between the two works. Molinos advocates for a continual renunciation of any personal impulse, where the soul remains in "passive quietude," trusting that God will lead it to enlightenment without direct human intervention. The Course follows a path requiring a sustained, conscious mental training through its daily lessons. It is not about staying in "quietude" but about actively questioning egoic perceptions to open oneself to the healing and liberating love. Lesson 31 declares, "I am not the victim of the world I see," reminding us that each person co-creates their experience and therefore has the power to free themselves from the illusions projected by the ego.

Another point of convergence is the idea of detachment from the world and its forms. Molinos insists that the soul must detach itself from everything external to find inner peace, including not only material things but also devotional practices that could become ends in themselves. *A Course in Miracles* also teaches that the world we perceive is an illusion created by the ego and that only by releasing our attachments to this illusion can we experience true freedom. "I have invented the world I see" (L-32), the Course states, suggesting that our perception of the world is a construct of the ego and that we can choose to see differently, through the eyes of love. Additionally, the Course declares, "In God you are at home, dreaming of exile but perfectly capable of waking to Reality" (T-10.I.6:3).

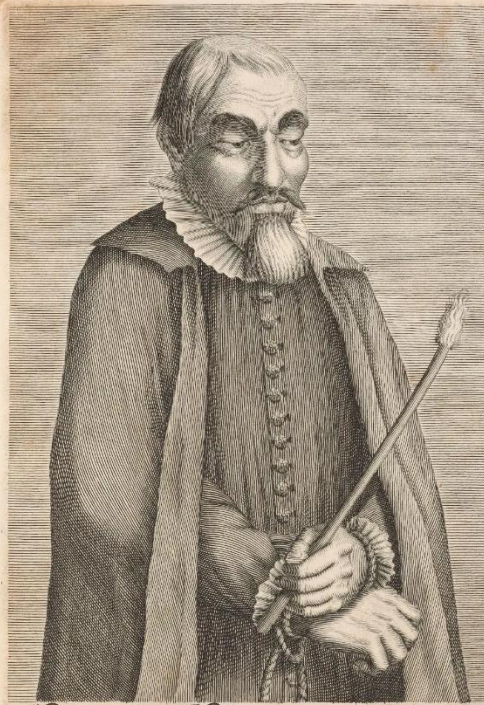
However, *The Spiritual Guide* focuses on traditional Christian mysticism, where the figure of God is central and is presented as the Bridegroom to whom the soul must unite in an act of absolute devotion. Molinos uses rich Christian symbolism to describe this union, invoking images such as the soul-bride in its relationship with God. *A Course in Miracles*, although it also uses the concept of God, departs from conventional Christian symbolism and emphasizes a direct experience of the divine that transcends any specific religion. The Course aims to re-educate perception to see God not as an external figure but as an internal presence that defines our true identity: “God is the Love in which I forgive” (L-46). The Course also states, “Your task is NOT to seek for love but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it” (T-16.V.6:1).

Both works also address the theme of inner guidance. Molinos suggests that once the soul reaches stillness, it is directly guided by divine will without the need for external mediations. Similarly, *A Course in Miracles* teaches that the Holy Spirit is the inner voice that guides us toward truth and helps us to undo the ego's errors. However, in the Course, spiritual guidance always comes from the Holy Spirit, that part of our own mind that remains in communication with God, rather than requiring a human spiritual guide or confessor, as Molinos proposes. As the Course states, “The Holy Spirit is God’s Answer...” (T-5.II.10:5). Trust in this inner voice is fundamental in both teachings: “Let the Holy Spirit teach you to see with love and not with fear,” the Course tells us. “The Holy Spirit abides at the end of time, where you too must be, for He is with you” (T-13.I.8:4), suggesting a constant companionship that assists the student in their awakening.

In summary, *The Spiritual Guide* by Miguel de Molinos and *A Course in Miracles* share a profound vision of the need to transcend the ego and seek a direct connection with the divine. While Molinos emphasizes surrender and ego annulment through radical passivity and acceptance of suffering, *A Course in Miracles* proposes a transformative process based on forgiveness and the reinterpretation of the world through the lens of love. Though distinct in their approaches and historical contexts, both paths offer a similar invitation: to relinquish the illusions of the ego in order to experience the peace and love that are our true essence.

Spiritual Guide

Miguel de Molinos



*Michael de Molinos chief of the Quietists,
Author of the Book called The Spiritual Guide, which disentangles the Soul
and brings it by the inward way to the getting the Rich Treasure of Internal Peace.
wth is an Abstract of the Mystical Divinity, whose Doctrine chiefly consists in
this, That men ought to bring their minds to a State of inward Quietness, from w^{ch}
the name of Quietists is given to all his followers: by this he hath proposed a great
reformation of mens minds and manners. He was condemned by the Inquisition
at Rome for Heresy y^e 3^d of Sept^r. 1687, they thinking his conduct to be factious, and
might breed a Schisme in the Church, for it has prevailed so much that he hath
20000 followers in Naples and Italy, and many friends at Rome.*

Drawn from the Original at Rome

Printed and Sold by John Overton at the White Horse without Newgate

Y 5

17/1435

PREFACE

*This book is presented to the sincere reader as the peace that
the restless world cannot offer*

"These words are faithful and true."
(Revelation 22:6)

Faithful and true words, sincere reader, are those expressed in this brief book, words inspired and even compelled by the Father of eternal lights. They arise from the deep and luminous heart of a virtuous man. They are, I repeat, faithful and true words; words of life and light that, if you wish to walk uprightly and surely along the path of justice and equity, will serve as an unquenchable torch for your feet and an ever-bright beacon for your steps.

The creation and publication of this work have not been influenced by the vain ambition for fleeting praise from humankind, nor by any other earthly interest or regard. Only pure love for God's greater glory and a fervent desire to promote Christian perfection motivated the one who wrote these lofty truths and the one who now publishes them.

The author, constantly engaged in consoling and guiding the countless souls God has entrusted to him—souls he does not seek, for he dwells in solitude and detachment—wrote this treatise with a swift pen, with no instruction other than that of holy prayer, no other lesson or study than the inner torment—the workshop where true wisdom is forged—with no other artifice than inner prompting, and no other purpose than to obey the eternal will and divine inspiration, with a force that might well be called compelling.

Desiring, then, that this book would see the light of day for the common good and as a guide for those blessed souls advancing along the path of self-denial toward the lofty and serene heights of mystical

perfection, I repeatedly requested the author to give it to me. Unable to succeed, I turned to his spiritual guide, who, after requesting and reading it, entrusted it to me.

I have arranged for its printing and overcome some obstacles along the way, understanding that the great Father of the household does not light such torches to hide them but to let them shine on His mystical lampstand. I am also certain that this book will prove immensely beneficial to true spiritual seekers and pure mystics. For it is not enough to write about divine influence and passive inner communion, as many have done until now, without clearing the way and revealing to the soul the inner struggles it encounters within itself, which hinder its ascent to this sublime state.

This has been the author's sole purpose, and it seems he has achieved it with great success. His doctrine is practical, his light pure, his style simple yet lofty, and his understanding clear though profound.

Read, dear reader, with complete confidence and holy joy, but also with attention and devout reflection, this practical book on the interior life. Here you will find the hidden manna of divine sweetness, along with the profound meaning and reach of inner peace, masterfully explained. You will discover the difference between meditation and contemplation, between the acquired and the infused. Here, too, the misery of the soul, the temptations of the enemy, his deceptions, snares, and tricks are unveiled. Finally, you will find the secret paths to attaining all virtues and climbing the high mountain of contemplation, annihilation, transformation, and inner peace.

If you are a faithful and obedient sheep of the Divine Shepherd and lovingly follow His call through this Spiritual Guide, you will enter the sweetest pastures of bliss, into the most tranquil and delightful interior sweetness, nourished by the crystal-clear streams of divine light that flow throughout this book. This light will not only illuminate your understanding but will also ignite your will, filling your soul with spiritual nourishment that will leave you with a fervent

desire to transform and conform yourself to the radiant image of eternal truth.

Enter, enter, beloved reader, this blessed path taught by this faithful and luminous Guide. This is the path of justice and equity, a way of blessing, sanctification, and truth; a path of wisdom, peace, and strength; a path of calm, light, and counsel. Though narrow at its entrance, it widens along the journey, and in its progress and conclusion, it opens to a vast horizon.

This is the path of the true freedom of heart and the genuine liberty of the children of God, outside of which all breadth becomes narrowness; all freedom, slavery; all rest, toil; all peace, conflict; all joy, deceit; all happiness, anguish; all greatness, vanity; and all relief, a distress of spirit. This is the holy and immaculate path that leads surely and directly to eternal life, guiding the soul, without danger or stumbling, to the high and serene heights of Christian perfection. These heights, filled with bliss and peace, are bathed in perpetual light, beyond the reach of human blindness, cravings, and the restlessness of earthly passions, beyond the winds and storms of the inconstancies and changes of temporal life.

This Spiritual Guide leads you to this blessed goal. Consider how many and how great the treasures are contained within this small book. Blessed are you, devout reader, if you not only read but also practice what you find here. May it bring you great benefit.

Your brother and servant in Christ crucified,
Fr. Juan de Santa María,
Provincial Minister.

APPROVALS

Approval from the Most Illustrious and Reverend Father Fray Martín Ibáñez de Villanueva, of the Sacred Order of the Shod Trinitarians, Qualifier of the Holy Inquisition in Spain, Synodal Examiner of the Archdiocese of Toledo, Doctor Laureate of the University of Alcalá, and Professor of Scotist Theology at the same University, former Bishop of Gaeta, and esteemed Archbishop of Ríjoles.

Approval from the Reverend Father Fray Francisco María of Bologna, Qualifier of the Holy Roman Universal Inquisition, Consultant to other congregations, and Minister General of the entire Order of Saint Francis.

Approval from the Reverend Father Fray Domingo of the Most Holy Trinity, Qualifier and Consultant for the Holy Office of Malta, and Qualifier of the Holy Roman Universal Inquisition, former General of his Order of Discalced Carmelites, and currently General Definer and Rector of the Seminary for Missions at the Convent of San Pancracio.

Approval from the Reverend Father Fray Francisco Gerez, Preacher to His Catholic Majesty, former Synodal Examiner for the Archdiocese of Seville, three-time Provincial of his Sacred Order of Capuchins in the Province of Andalusia, and currently General Definer of his entire Order.

Approval from the Reverend Father Martín de Esparza, of the Society of Jesus, Professor of Theology at the University of Salamanca and the Roman College, Consultant to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and Consultant and Qualifier of the Holy Office of Valladolid, and Qualifier of the Holy Roman Universal Inquisition.

Approval from the Reverend Father Fray Diego of Jesus, Discalced Religious of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity for the Redemption of Captives, General Procurator of the Spanish family, and Minister of the Convent of San Carlos in Rome.

INTRODUCTION

To those who read this

There is nothing more difficult in this world than to please everyone, nor more easy and common than to criticize the books that are published. Every work that comes to light, without exception and even under the greatest protection, is exposed both to the risk of displeasing and of being criticized. What, then, will become of this little book, without patrons to defend it and containing mystical content that, being little known, seems destined for general disapproval and rejection? If you do not understand it, dear reader, do not condemn it for that reason alone.

The "natural" person—one who is guided only by material concerns—may listen to or read about spiritual matters, but will not understand them. As Saint Paul says: "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14). If you disregard them, you align yourself with the worldly wise, of whom Saint Dionysius said that God does not communicate this wisdom, which is reserved for the simple and humble, even if they seem ignorant in the eyes of the world.

Mystical knowledge is not the fruit of intellect, but of experience; it is not invented, but tested; it is not acquired through reading, but received, and therefore it is reliable and effective, providing great help and abundant fruit.

This knowledge does not enter the soul through the ears or constant reading of books but through the generous infusion of the divine Spirit, whose grace communicates with exquisite intimacy to the simple and humble (Matthew 11:25).

There are learned people who have never read about these matters, and there are also spiritual ones who have not yet experienced them; thus, both groups reject these ideas—some out of ignorance, and others out of lack of experience.

Indeed, those who have not experienced this sweetness will be unable to judge these mysteries, and it is likely they will even be scandalized, as often happens to many when they hear of the wonders that divine love works within souls, because they do not perceive such tenderness within their own. Who can limit divine goodness, whose hand is not shortened to accomplish what it did in the past? God does not call the strongest by merit, but rather the weakest and neediest, so that His infinite mercy shines even brighter.

This knowledge is not theoretical but practical, where experience far surpasses even the most refined and alert speculation. And because purely scholastic scholars do not experience it, they condemn it: “These people speak abusively against whatever they do not understand” (Jude 1:10). This is why Saint Teresa advised her spiritual director to discuss spiritual matters only with those experienced in them: “For if they only know one path or have halted halfway, they will not be able to guide you well” (*Life*, CH. 22).

It is evident that those who condemn the teachings in this book lack experience in this practical and mystical knowledge and have not read Saint Dionysius, Saint Augustine, Saint Gregory, Saint Bernard, Saint Thomas, Saint Bonaventure, and many other saints and doctors approved by the Church, who support, teach, and practice this doctrine.

It is important to note that the doctrine of this book is not intended for everyone, but only for those who have already mortified their senses and passions, who have advanced in prayer, and who are called by God to the inner path. To these souls, it offers encouragement and guidance, removing obstacles that hinder their progress toward perfect contemplation.

I have endeavored to make the style of this book devout, chaste, and useful, free of ornate phrasing, devoid of eloquent displays or theological subtleties; I have focused solely on teaching the plain truth with humility, simplicity, and clarity.

Do not be surprised that new spiritual books appear each day, for God always has new lights to communicate, and souls always need instruction. Not all has been said, nor all written, and thus there will always be a need to write until the end of time. Remarkable were the lights God communicated to the Church through Saint Thomas Aquinas, who, approaching death, affirmed that at that moment God had given him so much light that all he had written up to then seemed nothing to him. Thus, God has, and always will have, new lights to communicate, for His infinite knowledge is never exhausted.

Do not be discouraged by the many and great trials of the interior path, for anything of great value deserves an equivalent effort. Take courage, for not only the difficulties described here, but many more, can be overcome through divine grace and inner strength.

My intention has not been to discuss contemplation or to defend it, as others have done, who with wisdom and speculation have published entire books filled with solid arguments, doctrines, and quotations from saints and Sacred Scripture to refute the opinions of those who condemn it out of lack of experience or even theoretical understanding.

Years of experience—through the trust placed in me, despite my inadequacies, to guide many souls along the inner path to which they have been called—have taught me the great need to free these souls from obstacles, inclinations, attachments, and affections that entirely prevent their advance toward perfect contemplation.

This practical book is devoted to this primary objective, for it is not enough to defend the inner path of contemplation from those who contradict it; it is also necessary to remove the obstacles that prevent the souls who are called and committed from continuing to advance and from soaring spiritually. For this purpose, I have relied more on what God, in His infinite mercy, has inspired and taught me than on the speculative lessons of books.

In a few instances, though rare, I cite the authority of some experienced and practical authors to clarify that the doctrine taught here

is neither unique nor exceptional. This, then, has been my first objective: not to secure the inner path, but to clear it. The second, to instruct spiritual guides so they do not hinder the progress of the souls whom God calls along these hidden paths toward inner peace and ultimate bliss. May God, in His infinite mercy, fulfill this cherished purpose.

I know well that many, lacking experience, will criticize what is taught here, but I trust in God that some souls, whom His Majesty calls to this knowledge, will find benefit in it, and the fruit of their gain will reward my efforts. This has been the sole desire of my heart, and if God, as is constant, accepts and uses these pure intentions, I will be satisfied, even if I receive harsh criticism.

So be it.^I

^I Commentary On The Introduction

In the Introduction to *The Spiritual Guide*, Miguel de Molinos establishes the foundational framework of his work and anticipates potential reactions it might elicit among readers. From the outset, he acknowledges the challenge of pleasing everyone and the ease with which published works are often criticized, especially when they address mystical and lesser-known themes. Molinos demonstrates a keen awareness of the difficulties he faces in presenting a doctrine that may be misunderstood or rejected by those who lack experience in the spiritual path.

Addressing the reader directly, Molinos requests that if the content is not understood, it should not be condemned. He cites Saint Paul: “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:14), emphasizing that those guided solely by material concerns may struggle to grasp profound spiritual truths. This reference sets up a distinction between purely intellectual knowledge and the understanding that arises from spiritual experience and divine grace.

Molinos stresses that mystical knowledge is not the product of human intellect but rather of experience and the infusion of the Holy Spirit. It is not gained through reading or study; it is received and lived. This claim resonates with the Christian mystical tradition, where true knowledge of God is seen as transcending reason and obtained through contemplative union. Saint Teresa of Avila, in *The Interior Castle*, similarly emphasizes that the journey to God is an inward one, and mystical experiences cannot be fully explained or comprehended by those who have not personally lived them.

Molinos recognizes that both learned individuals without mystical experience and spiritual seekers who have not reached certain depths may reject or critique his doctrine. By quoting Saint Teresa, who advised discussing spiritual matters only with those who are experienced, he reinforces the idea that understanding such subjects requires personal experience. This highlights the importance of humility and openness on the spiritual path, avoiding hasty judgments on matters outside one's experience.

Moreover, Molinos defends the orthodoxy and solidity of his teachings by referencing saints and Church doctors such as Saint Dionysius, Saint Augustine, Saint Gregory, Saint Bernard, Saint Thomas, and Saint Bonaventure. In doing so, he aims to legitimize his doctrine and demonstrate that it is grounded in a venerable and recognized Christian tradition. This strategy also serves to preempt and counter potential accusations of heterodoxy or dangerous innovation.

Significantly, Molinos clarifies that his work is not intended for everyone, but rather for souls who have already advanced in mortifying their senses and passions, who practice prayer, and who are called by God to the inner path. He acknowledges that not everyone is prepared for this type of teaching and that it is necessary to remove obstacles that prevent these souls from progressing toward perfect contemplation. This selectivity reflects an understanding of the diverse stages in spiritual development and the need to adapt guidance to each individual's capabilities and dispositions.

Regarding style, Molinos emphasizes that he has avoided rhetorical embellishments and theological subtleties, opting for humble, simple, and clear language to teach the unadorned truth. This choice reinforces his message about the importance of simplicity and purity of intention in spiritual life. By forgoing unnecessary eloquence and erudition, he enables the reader to focus on the essential content and practical application of his teachings.

Molinos also reflects on the continuous need for new spiritual works, arguing that God always has new lights to communicate and that souls require constant instruction. He cites the example of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who, at the end of his life, acknowledged that all he had written seemed insignificant compared to the vastness of divine wisdom. This reflection emphasizes the infinitude of God and the impossibility of exhausting His knowledge, inviting a permanent attitude of humility and openness.

The author adopts a humble stance in anticipating that his work may be criticized and that many, due to lack of experience, may fail to understand it. Nevertheless, he expresses his confidence that some souls will benefit from it and that their spiritual growth will make his effort worthwhile. This commitment to others' spiritual well-being reflects his sincerity and dedication as a guide on the inner path.

At its core, this introduction invites the reader to embark on a profound experience of God, beyond intellectual knowledge or external practices. Molinos lays the

foundation for his teaching, anticipates potential objections, and emphasizes the importance of mystical experience as a means to union with the divine. His focus on humility, simplicity, and reliance on divine grace aligns with the teachings of other mystics and offers a valuable perspective for those seeking a deeper spiritual life.

This introduction also highlights the challenges faced by those who wish to advance on the mystical path, especially in a context where they may lack experienced guides or encounter misunderstandings. Molinos positions himself as a facilitator who, through his work, seeks to remove obstacles and provide guidance based on his own experience and the Church's tradition.

In commenting on the conditions of his time, it is important to recognize that Molinos was writing in an era when mystical practices could be viewed with suspicion, and ecclesiastical authority exerted strict control over doctrines. His emphasis on personal experience and the inner guidance of the Holy Spirit could have been interpreted as a threat to the established order. However, Molinos endeavors to demonstrate that his teaching is consistent with tradition and that he does not intend to introduce dangerous novelties.

In conclusion, the introduction to *The Spiritual Guide* offers a sensitive, original, and intelligent view of the mystical life. Molinos combines a deep understanding of spiritual dynamics with a humility and simplicity that make his teaching accessible. His work invites the reader to move beyond the limitations of mere intellectual knowledge and to open themselves to God's transformative action within the soul. In doing so, he makes a significant contribution to the legacy of Christian spirituality and provides valuable resources for those seeking a more intimate and authentic relationship with the divine.

PROEM

FIRST ADMONITION

On the two ways to approach god: through meditation and reasoning, or through pure faith and contemplation

There are two ways to approach God: one through consideration and reasoning, and the other through the purity of faith—a general, undistinguished, and diffuse comprehension. The first way is known as meditation, and the second as interior recollection or acquired contemplation. Meditation is suited to beginners, while recollection is for those who have progressed. The first method is tangible and material; the second is more stripped-down, pure, and inward.

When the soul has become accustomed to meditating on mysteries, joining imagination with bodily images and moving from creature to creature and concept to concept (always falling short of what it truly seeks), and finally moves from creatures to the Creator, God often takes it by the hand (unless He calls it from the start along the path of pure faith without mediation). He then leads the understanding to abandon all considerations and reasoning, moving it beyond the material and tangible, placing it in a simple and dark notion of faith. In this way, the soul seeks only its Beloved with the wings of love, needing no longer the intellect to love Him, for then its love would be limited, dependent on creatures, like droplets of water falling slowly.

The less it depends on creatures and the more it relies solely on God and His secret teaching through pure faith, the stronger, more lasting, and deeper its love will be. Once the soul has gained all the knowledge that meditation and physical images of creatures can offer, if the Lord removes it from this state, depriving it of reasoning and leaving it in divine darkness to move along the straight path of pure faith, it must allow itself to be guided and should not attempt to

love with the limitation and poverty that such images afford. The soul should be convinced that all the world's insights and the most refined ideas from the wisest minds fall short and that the goodness and beauty of its Beloved infinitely surpass all understanding, persuading itself that no creatures can lead it to the true knowledge of God.

Therefore, it must advance in love by leaving behind everything it has understood. Let it love God as He is in Himself, not as imagined, and if it cannot know Him as He truly is, let it love Him without knowing Him, under the dark veils of faith, much like a child who has never seen their father but, trusting in what has been said of him, loves him as though they had seen him.

The soul that has been removed from reasoning should not force itself to seek a clearer or more specific understanding. Instead, it should remain free, without support or sensible comforts, with a spirit poor and empty of all that its natural appetite demands. It must remain quiet, steadfast, and constant, allowing the Lord to act, even if it feels alone, dry, and in darkness. Though it may seem inactive, this is only inactivity in terms of its tangible senses and material activity, but not for God, who is at work within it, imparting true knowledge. In essence, the higher the spirit ascends, the more it withdraws from the tangible. Many souls reach this doorway, but few cross it due to the lack of an experienced guide; and those who do have one often do not surrender with true and complete abandonment.

It may be argued that the will cannot love without the understanding clearly perceiving, as it is commonly held that one can only love what is known. To this, it is replied that although the understanding does not know clearly through reason, images, and considerations, it comprehends through a dark, general, and indistinct faith. This knowledge, although dark, indistinct, and general, is supernatural and provides a clearer and more perfect knowledge of God than any sensory or particular notion that can be formed in this life, as all physical and sensory images are infinitely distant from God.

Saint Dionysius says we know God more perfectly through negations than through affirmations. We feel God's presence more profoundly when we recognize that He is incomprehensible and beyond all understanding than when we conceive Him under any created image or beauty, which would be a limited understanding. Thus, a greater love and reverence arise from this dark, indistinct, and negative understanding than from any other clear and sensory understanding; for such understanding is more fitting for God and free from creaturely influence, whereas the other, the more it depends on creatures, the less it possesses of God.

SECOND ADMONITION

On the difference between meditation and contemplation

8. Saint John Damascene, along with other saints, affirms that prayer is an elevation of the understanding toward God. Since God is above all creatures, the soul can only look toward Him and communicate with Him by rising above all things. This intimate communion of the soul with God, known as prayer, is divided into meditation and contemplation.

9. When the understanding reflects on the mysteries of our holy faith with focused attention, aiming to grasp its truths, analyzing its details, and pondering its circumstances to move the will toward devotion, this exercise of reflection and devotion is properly called meditation.

10. When the soul already knows the truth (either through the habit acquired in meditation or through a particular light granted by the Lord) and keeps the eyes of the understanding fixed upon that truth, contemplating it with simplicity, calm, repose, and silence, without need for further reflections, reasoning, or proofs, while the will loves, marvels, and delights in it—this is properly called the

prayer of faith, the prayer of quiet, inner recollection, or contemplation.

11. Saint Thomas Aquinas and all mystical teachers describe contemplation as a simple, gentle, and serene gaze upon eternal truth, free from discourse and reflection. However, if the soul delights in observing God's effects within creatures—especially within the humanity of Christ, which is the most perfect of all—this experience is not considered perfect contemplation, as Saint Thomas explains, since creatures serve as means to know God as He is in Himself. Although the humanity of Christ is the holiest and most perfect means to reach God, the supreme instrument of our salvation, and the channel through which we receive all blessings we hope for, it is not the supreme good. The supreme good consists in seeing God, for Christ is greater by His divinity than by His humanity. Therefore, when one thinks of God (given that divinity is united with humanity), one always thinks of Jesus Christ, especially the contemplative, whose faith is more simple, pure, and constant.

12. Whenever the end is reached, the means are set aside, and upon arriving in port, the voyage ceases. Similarly, when the soul, having strived through meditation, reaches the quiet, calm, and rest of contemplation, it must lay aside reasoning and rest in a loving, simple attention to the presence of God, gazing upon and loving Him. It should gently dismiss all images that arise, quiet the understanding in that divine presence, and gather all its memory in God, content with the general and diffuse knowledge of Him that it holds through faith, applying all its will to loving Him, for therein lies true fruit.

13. Saint Dionysius says: "As for you, dearest Timothy, diligently apply yourself to mystical speculations, setting aside the senses and operations of the understanding, all sensible and intelligible objects, and in general, all things that exist and do not exist; and in a manner unknown and ineffable, to the extent possible for human nature, rise to union with the One who is beyond all nature and knowledge." Thus speak the words of the Saint.

14. Therefore, it is essential to set aside every creature, all that is sensible, intelligible, and affective, in short, all that exists and does not exist, to throw oneself into the loving embrace of God. He will return everything we have left behind, accompanied by strength and a greater capacity for intense love. This love will hold us in a holy and blessed silence, which is worth more than all other actions combined. Saint Thomas says, “What the understanding can grasp of God in this life is very little, but what the will can love is much.”

15. When the soul reaches this state, it must withdraw entirely within itself, into its pure and profound center, where the image of God resides. There, it will find loving attention, silence, forgetfulness of all things, and the total surrender of the will in perfect resignation, communing with God in solitude as if there were no one else in the world but the two of them.

16. Rightly do the saints say that meditation requires effort and bears fruit, while contemplation, in contrast, operates without effort, with peace, rest, delight, and much greater fruit. Meditation sows, while contemplation reaps; meditation seeks, while contemplation finds; meditation chews the food, while contemplation savors and is nourished by it.

17. The mystic Bernard expressed all of this in the words of the Savior: “Seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.” “Reading places solid food in the mouth; meditation chews it; prayer extracts its flavor; and contemplation is the sweetness itself, which delights and renews.” With this, the nature of meditation and contemplation, as well as the difference between them, has been explained.

THIRD ADMONITION

On the difference between acquired and active contemplation and infused and passive contemplation, and the signs

indicating when God wishes to lead the soul from meditation to contemplation

18. There are two types of contemplation: one is imperfect, active, and acquired; the other is infused and passive. The active form (which has been discussed thus far) is one that we can achieve through our own effort, with the help of divine grace. It involves gathering our faculties and senses, preparing ourselves for whatever God wishes to accomplish within us. Rojas explains this in his *Spiritual Life* (CH. 19), as does Arnaya in his *Confessions*.

19. Saint Bernard also recommends this active contemplation, referring to the words, “I will hear what God speaks within me.” He says, “Mary chose the better part, although the humble activity of Martha is perhaps no less meritorious before God. Yet, Mary’s choice is praised, as it should be preferred in our regard; the other should only be practiced if it is imposed upon us, and then borne with patience.”

20. Saint Thomas likewise encourages acquired contemplation with these words: “The closer a person brings their own soul or the soul of another to God, the greater and more acceptable their sacrifice is to Him. Hence, dedicating one’s own soul and the souls of others to contemplation is more pleasing to God than engaging in action.” These are truly clear words to silence those who criticize acquired contemplation.

21. The closer a person comes to God or seeks to bring their own soul or the souls of others closer to Him, the greater and more pleasing is this sacrifice before God. Therefore (the same saint concludes), it is more pleasing to God for a person to devote their soul and those of others to contemplation than to action. And it cannot be argued that the saint is referring to infused contemplation here, for a person cannot prepare themselves for infused contemplation, but only for acquired contemplation.

22. Although it is said that we can enter into acquired contemplation with the Lord's help, no one should, of their own will, transition from the state of meditation to this without the counsel of an experienced director who can clearly discern if the soul is truly called by God to this interior path. In the absence of a director, the soul itself may recognize this call through a book that addresses these matters and which, by divine providence, is given to it to discover what it experiences unknowingly within. However, even if the soul gains certainty from a book about moving from meditation to the stillness of contemplation, there will remain in it a fervent desire for deeper instruction.

23. To facilitate this instruction, I would like to offer some signs that indicate a vocation for contemplation. The first and most essential sign is the inability to meditate; if the soul attempts to meditate, it experiences notable restlessness and fatigue, provided this difficulty does not stem from physical indisposition, altered state of mind, melancholic tendency, or dryness due to lack of preparation.

24. It will be evident that this is not a fault, but rather a true calling, when a day, a month, or even several months pass without the ability to reason during prayer. "The Lord leads the soul toward contemplation," says Saint Teresa, "and the understanding becomes greatly hindered in meditating on the passion of Christ. Because meditation involves seeking God, once He is found and the soul is accustomed through the will to continually seek Him, the understanding no longer wishes to exhaust itself" (*Interior Mansions*, VI, CH. 7). Thus speaks the saint.

25. The second sign is that, though it no longer experiences sensible devotion, the soul seeks solitude and avoids conversation. The third sign is that reading spiritual books becomes tedious, as they do not speak to the inner sweetness sensed within, even if the soul does not fully recognize it. The fourth sign is that, despite being deprived of reasoning, it remains firmly committed to persevering in prayer.

The fifth sign is a deepening self-knowledge and humility, an abhorrence of sin, and a growing reverence for God.

26. The other form of contemplation is perfect and infused, in which (as Saint Teresa says) it is God who speaks to the soul, suspending its understanding, restraining its thoughts, and rendering it, so to speak, speechless; so that even if it wishes to speak, it can barely do so. It understands that this divine Master is teaching it without need of words, holding its faculties in suspension, as any action on their part would be more of a hindrance than a help. The soul delights without understanding how it delights, burns with love without knowing how it loves; it perceives that it enjoys what it loves, but knows not how it experiences this joy. It knows this joy is beyond what the understanding could desire; the will embraces it without comprehending, and though it cannot grasp it, it knows it is a gift beyond the merit of all earthly labor. It is a gift granted by the Lord according to His will, as the Master of all, who gives as He is, to whom He wills, and how He wills. In this, His Majesty is everything, for it is a work that surpasses our natural capacity (*Way of Perfection*, CH. 25). All of this is from the holy mother. From this, it follows that this perfect contemplation is infused, granted freely by the Lord to whom He desires.

FOURTH ADMONITION

Subject of this book: to uproot the rebellion of our own will to attain inner peace

27. The path to inner peace consists in conforming our will entirely to the disposition of the divine will: “In all things, we must subject our will to the divine will, for this is the peace of our will—that it be in all things aligned with the divine will” (Hugh of St. Cher, on Psalm 13). Those who desire everything to happen according to their own preference have not come to know this path. “They have not

known the way of peace” (Psalm 13) and are not willing to walk it; therefore, they live a bitter and joyless life, constantly restless and disturbed, without finding the way of peace, which is complete conformity with the divine will.

28. This conformity is the gentle yoke that leads us to the realm of peace and inner serenity. Thus, we understand that the rebellion of our own will is the main cause of our restlessness and that, by not submitting to the gentle yoke of the divine will, we endure many disturbances and disquiet. Oh, souls! If we were to surrender our will to the divine will in all its dispositions, how much tranquility we would experience, how much gentle peace, what inner serenity, what supreme bliss—a foretaste of beatitude itself! This, then, will be the theme of this book; may the Lord grant me His divine light to reveal the secret paths of this inner way and the perfect joy of true peace.¹

¹ Commentary On The Proem

The *Proem* of Miguel de Molinos’s *Spiritual Guide* immerses us directly in the foundations of his teaching and sets the tone for the entire work. In these initial admonitions, Molinos presents two paths to God: meditation and contemplation. Meditation, associated with the early stages of spiritual life, relies on reasoning and imagination to approach the divine mystery. Contemplation, on the other hand, belongs to a more advanced stage, in which the soul surrenders to pure faith without the active intervention of the mind. This distinction is key to understanding his proposal: naked faith and unconditional surrender are the true path to union with the divine.

Molinos insists on the need to renounce rational and sensory control. To be truly united with God, one must detach from the desire to understand or manipulate the spiritual experience. It is a matter of advancing through a “dark faith,” a path where the intellect can no longer guide, and where a radical detachment from the ego is required. This idea connects with traditions such as Sufism and Zen, where detachment from the self and total surrender are likewise necessary conditions for attaining the Absolute.

Another essential element of the *Proem* is detachment from the understanding. Molinos exhorts the reader to abandon images and reasoning, as these may become obstacles to the direct experience of the divine. This perspective resonates with Zen practice, in which emptying the mind and abandoning thought are fundamental steps toward enlightenment. Like other great mystics, Molinos warns that

thought can hinder access to pure contemplation, which is reached only through total abandonment.

This same principle is expressed with remarkable clarity in *A Course in Miracles*, which states: “Do simply this: Be still, and lay aside all thoughts of what you are and what God is; all concepts you have learned about the world; all images you hold about yourself. Empty your mind of everything you think is either true or false, or good or bad; of every thought you judge as worthy, and all the ideas of which you are ashamed. Hold onto nothing. Do not bring with you one thought the past has taught, nor one belief you ever learned before from anything. Forget this world, forget this course, and come with wholly empty hands unto your God.” (L-189.7)

Both teachings, separated by centuries and arising from vastly different contexts, converge on a central point: the necessity of emptying the mind, releasing all acquired knowledge, and abandoning personal effort so that the divine may reveal itself. For Molinos, this act of interior dispossession is the essence of contemplation. For *A Course in Miracles*, it is the only possible access to the experience of God. In both cases, we are invited to total surrender, to a nakedness of soul that relinquishes all pretense of control or understanding, and that only in this radical silence can be inhabited by Truth.

Molinos likewise underscores the centrality of silence and stillness as authentic vehicles for union with God. These states must not be confused with mere passivity; rather, they represent the optimal disposition for God to act without interference. It is here that his proposal reaches a profound resonance with the Taoist idea of *wu wei*—non-action—where true action is born from harmony with the divine, not from the effort of the ego.

Molinos also cautions that contemplation is not for everyone. It is a path reserved for those who have mortified their senses and passions, and who are prepared for a radical surrender that entails the renunciation of their own desires. While this idea may seem exclusionary, it in fact underscores the seriousness of the contemplative path and the depth of commitment it requires. It is not simply another option along the spiritual journey, but a specific vocation—a divine calling for those willing to abandon everything and seek inner peace in the sole presence of God.

The *Proem*, then, is not merely a doctrinal introduction. It is an invitation, almost a consecration, to a radically receptive and stripped-down attitude. Far from presenting itself as a theological treatise, it appears as a lived guide—clear and profound—intended for those ready to embark on this journey of inner transformation. From these opening pages, Molinos makes it clear that only in silence, where all noise of mind and desire ceases, can the soul find God.

BOOK ONE

*On the darkness, dryness, and temptations with
which God purges souls, and on interior recollection
or acquired contemplation*

INTRODUCTION TO BOOK ONE

On preparation for the spiritual journey, the importance of silence and meditation, detachment from worldly attachments, purification of desires, and the foundation of prayer and virtue

The First Book of the *Spiritual Guide* opens the path with firm and unadorned clarity. Molinos, like one who knows the terrain from within, wastes no time on embellishments or theorizing: his urgency is to free the soul from its initial bonds—those that still keep it at the surface of the journey.

Here, stillness is presented not as a goal, but as a necessary condition for God to act. This is not yet the realm of lofty contemplative flights, but of initial detachment: suspending judgment, silencing the desire to understand, beginning to trust in what cannot be grasped.

This book is a pedagogy of availability. The soul must unlearn how to seek God by its own strength and begin to let itself be found. This demands a wholehearted abandonment of its usual supports—reason, effort, consolation, sensible devotion—and a humble entry into unknowing.

It is not an abstract renunciation, but a concrete one: to die to one's own will, to allow the motions of the ego to cease, to let the heart be emptied so that God may fill it. Molinos guides this process with a steady hand, but without force, pointing precisely to what obstructs peace, what clouds the inner gaze, what keeps the soul trapped in itself.

This first stretch is decisive, for one who does not learn to stop will scarcely be able to advance. But it is also luminous: one who dares to let go begins to glimpse that everything is being done within him, from beyond himself.

Molinos does not promise results. He merely invites. His voice, serene and deep, reminds us that the interior path does not begin with great experiences, but with a silent yes, repeated in secret, to the work of God within us.

KEY THEMES IN BOOK ONE

The First Book of the *Spiritual Guide* is an initial call to recollection. Here, Miguel de Molinos does not so much teach new ideas as propose a new way of being: less noisy, less willful, more disposed to being shaped. His teachings invite the soul to shed its external habits and to make itself humbly available to the secret work of grace.

Interior Silence and Availability

Everything begins with an act of stillness. It is not merely about ceasing speech, but about ceasing the ego's constant self-assertion. The silence Molinos proposes is a form of availability: to create within a space without pretension, where God may speak without being interrupted. This form of listening is the true threshold of the path.

Meditation as a Gateway

Although Molinos will later place greater value on passive contemplation, in these early stages he teaches meditation as a necessary practice—not to produce experiences, but to help the soul turn its attention toward the eternal. To meditate here is to learn to look inward without distraction, and to recognize the sacred beyond forms.

Detachment and the Soul's Freedom

The soul cannot move forward while it carries weight. This is why Molinos insists on detachment—not as a moralistic renunciation, but as an act of freedom. Letting go of what possesses us—desires, ambitions, disordered affections—is not impoverishment, but the opening of space for what cannot be bought or measured: the presence of God.

Purification of Desire

It is not enough to renounce externals. Molinos also leads toward a more subtle purification: that of desire itself. Learning to desire what God wills—or better yet, to desire nothing apart from Him—is a deep purification that transforms the heart. In this process, the soul becomes increasingly transparent to the divine will.

Simple Prayer and Embodied Virtue

For Molinos, prayer is not a rhetorical exercise but a loving disposition. It is more about being than speaking, more about offering oneself than asking. Silent, humble, persevering prayer becomes the very breath of the soul. And with it, virtues arise—not as achievements, but as the natural fruit of a life beginning to revolve around God.

Perseverance Without Consolation

In this early stretch of the journey, the soul often experiences dryness, doubts, resistance. Molinos insists on constancy: to continue praying, to continue trusting, even when everything seems barren. This fidelity without immediate reward is one of the signs of a true beginning.

Humility as Foundation

No progress is possible without humility. Not as servile posture, but as a recognized truth: that we are not capable of guiding ourselves. Molinos teaches that only the soul that knows its need can receive. Humility disarms the ego and prepares the ground for true wisdom.

This first book is, in sum, a threshold. Here the soul learns to cease seeking by its own means and to finally set out on the journey—not toward a spiritual achievement, but toward a quiet, hidden transformation that only God can bring about in the silence of the heart.

CHAPTER I

For God to rest within the soul, the heart must remain at peace amid any disturbance, temptation, or tribulation

1. You must understand that your soul is the center, dwelling, and kingdom of God. But for the great King to rest upon the throne of your soul, you must strive to keep it clean, serene, empty, and peaceful. Clean of faults and blemishes; serene from fears; empty of attachments, desires, and thoughts; and peaceful amidst temptations and tribulations.

2. Therefore, you must always keep your heart at peace to preserve this living temple of God in purity, acting with a clear and pure intention, praying, obeying, and enduring without allowing yourself to be disturbed by whatever the Lord may permit to come your way. For it is certain that, for the good of your soul and your spiritual progress, He will allow the envious adversary to disturb this city of calm and throne of peace with temptations, suggestions, and tribulations, and, through others, with grievous troubles and great persecutions.

3. Keep your heart steadfast and calm in the face of any unrest these tribulations may cause you. Enter into the depths of your own self to overcome them, for there resides the divine strength that protects, shelters, and fights for you. If one has a secure fortress, they do not fear, even as enemies pursue, for by retreating within it, they challenge and overcome them. The secure fortress to triumph over your visible and invisible enemies, and all their schemes and tribulations, lies within your own soul, for there dwells the divine help and sovereign aid; retreat within, and all shall remain calm, secure, peaceful, and serene.

4. Your primary and constant endeavor should be to keep that throne, which is your heart, in peace so that the sovereign King may repose there. The way to pacify it is to enter into yourself through interior recollection. All your strength must reside in prayer and in a

loving withdrawal into the divine presence. When you find yourself most besieged, seek refuge in that realm of peace, where you will find strength. When you feel weakest, withdraw to that shelter of prayer, the only means to overcome the enemy and calm tribulation. Do not depart from it in the storm until, like another Noah, you experience tranquility, security, and serenity, and until your will finds itself resigned, devoted, peaceful, and strengthened.

5. Finally, do not be distressed or lose confidence when you feel yourself faltering. Restore your peace whenever you feel disturbed, for this divine Lord only desires of you, so that He may rest in your soul and make it a rich throne of peace, that you seek within your heart, through interior recollection and with His divine grace, silence in the midst of noise, solitude amid the crowd, light in darkness, forgetfulness in offense, courage in cowardice, bravery in fear, endurance in temptation, peace in conflict, and calm in tribulation.^I

^I Commentary on Chapter I of Book One

In this first chapter of the *Spiritual Guide*, Miguel de Molinos introduces the essential foundations for the spiritual path he proposes throughout his work. This chapter establishes the importance of calming the emotions so that God may rest within the soul. Molinos uses a series of metaphors and concepts that, at first glance, may seem simple but that hold significant depth regarding the nature of the inner life and the relationship with the Divine.

The author begins by affirming that the soul is the center, dwelling place, and kingdom of God. This idea suggests that within each individual exists a sacred space where the Divine can dwell. However, for God to rest upon this “throne” of the soul, it is necessary for it to be clean, tranquil, empty, and peaceful. These four states represent internal conditions that the spiritual seeker must cultivate:

Clean of faults and defects: This implies a process of moral and ethical purification, where the individual acknowledges and works on their imperfections and errors. It is not a matter of unattainable perfection, but of a consistent attitude of improvement and sincerity with oneself.

Tranquil from fears: Fears and anxieties can disturb the serenity of the soul. Molinos invites trust in divine providence, freeing oneself from worries that hinder inner rest.

Empty of attachments, desires, and thoughts: Here, the importance of detachment is highlighted. It is not about rejecting emotions or thoughts, but about not clinging to them in such a way that they dominate us and distance us from deep peace.

Peaceful amidst temptations and tribulations: Life presents challenges and difficulties, but maintaining inner peace amidst trials is essential for God to fully dwell within the soul.

Molinos recognizes that the “envious enemy”—a personification of forces that distance us from the divine, commonly represented by the ego (from a psychological perspective) or the devil (from a religious perspective)—will attempt to disturb this peace through temptations and tribulations. However, he offers a practical and powerful solution: seeking refuge within oneself. He asserts that within each person exists a divine fortress that defends and shelters us. This idea is especially relevant, as it empowers the individual by reminding them that the source of peace and strength is not outside, but within themselves.

The metaphor of the fortress is significant. Just as someone who takes refuge in a secure citadel during a siege, the individual can find within themselves a place of protection and calm. This internal fortress is accessible through inner recollection and prayer. Molinos emphasizes that prayer is not merely a ritual practice but a means of deeply connecting with the Divine and finding serenity amid life’s storms.

The author also addresses the importance of not allowing oneself to be discouraged by falls or moments of weakness. It is natural for human beings to experience highs and lows, but the essential thing is to regain peace whenever we are disturbed. This spiritual resilience is key to maintaining the heart as a throne worthy of God.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this chapter is how Molinos integrates the duality of human experience: he acknowledges the existence of both external and internal conflicts, while at the same time offering a path to transcend them. By seeking “silence in the midst of noise,” “solitude in the midst of the crowd,” and “peace in the midst of conflict,” he invites us to find an unchanging center within ourselves. This practice is deeply transformative, as it allows the individual to live in the world without being dominated by it.

Moreover, Molinos establishes from the outset the importance of right and pure intention in all actions. It is not enough to perform good deeds or practice rituals; what truly matters is the intention behind each act. This purity of heart makes the soul a suitable place for God to rest. This aligns with Matthew 5:27-28: “You have heard that it was said: Do not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

The central message of this chapter is timeless and relevant to any spiritual seeker, regardless of their religious tradition. The idea of finding inner peace amidst

difficulties is a universal longing. Molinos offers practical tools to achieve this, emphasizing introspection, prayer, and detachment.

In the context of the entire work, this chapter lays the foundation for the path of transformation that Molinos proposes. The annihilation of the ego, inner mortification, and the pursuit of union with God are themes that will be developed in depth in the following chapters. However, everything begins with the disposition of the heart. If the heart is not at peace, it will hardly advance to the deeper levels of spiritual life.

In conclusion, this first chapter is an invitation to embark on an inner journey. Molinos, with his direct style and evocative metaphors, reminds us that true strength and peace are found within ourselves. By keeping the heart clean, tranquil, empty, and peaceful, we prepare the ground for a deeper and more meaningful relationship with the Divine. This is the first step on a path that, though challenging, promises radical transformation and a happiness that transcends external circumstances.

CHAPTER II

Even if the soul cannot reason, it must persevere in prayer and not become distressed, for this is its greatest happiness

6. Like all souls whom the Lord calls to the inner path, you will find yourself full of confusion and doubt when you feel that words fail you in prayer. It may seem that God no longer assists you as before, that prayer is no longer for you, and that you are wasting time by not being able to form even a single thought as you once could, no matter how hard you try.

7. How much distress and perplexity this lack of words will cause you! And if, in that moment, you lack a spiritual guide experienced in the mystical path, the suffering will be greater for you and confusing for the guide as well. They might think your soul is not well disposed and suggest that, for peace of mind, you make a general confession, which would only lead to confusion for both. How many souls are called to the inner path, yet, rather than being guided and encouraged, their spiritual guides, lacking understanding, disrupt their course and lead them astray!

8. You must, therefore, convince yourself that when you lack words in prayer, you should not retreat but rejoice, for this is your greatest blessing. It is a clear sign that the Lord wishes you to walk in divine presence through faith and silence, a path that is both the most beneficial and the simplest, for with a single gaze or loving attention toward God, the soul places itself like a humble beggar before its Lord, or like an innocent child surrendering to the tender and safe embrace of its beloved mother. As Gerson said, “Though I dedicated forty years to reading and prayer, I found nothing more effective or swifter to reach mystical theology than presenting our spirit before God as a child and a beggar.”

9. This prayer is not only the simplest but also the safest, as it is free from the workings of the imagination, which is always

susceptible to the devil's deceptions and the disturbances of melancholic humor, as well as from reasoning, through which the soul easily becomes distracted and tangled in speculations that lead it to focus on itself.

10. When God wished to instruct His servant Moses (Exodus 34) and give him the stone tablets with the divine law, He called him to the foot of the mountain; in that moment, with God's presence, the mountain was enveloped in darkness, surrounded by dark and dense clouds, and Moses remained motionless, unable to think or reason. After seven days, God commanded him to ascend to the mountain's peak, where He revealed Himself in glory and filled Moses with great consolation.

11. When God wishes, in an extraordinary way, to lead the soul to the school of divine and loving lessons of the inner law, He allows it to advance amid darkness and dryness to draw it closer to Himself. Divine Majesty knows well that to draw near and understand His teachings, it is not one's own effort and reasoning that matter, but silent surrender.

12. What a great example the patriarch Noah gave us. After being deemed a madman and finding himself in the midst of a raging sea that flooded the world, without sails or oars and surrounded by wild animals within the closed ark, he advanced solely by faith, without knowing or understanding what God intended for him.

13. What is most important for you, redeemed soul, is patience and not abandoning the practice of prayer, even if you cannot reason; walk with firm faith and holy silence, dying to yourself and to all your natural capacities, trusting that God is who He is, and does not change, nor can He err or desire anything other than your good. It is clear that those who are to die will necessarily feel it; yet, how well spent is the time in which the soul is dead to ego, silent and surrendered in the divine presence, ready to receive the divine influences without hindrance!

14. The senses are not capable of perceiving divine goods; so if you wish to be happy and wise, be silent and believe, suffer and be patient, trust and move forward; silence and allowing yourself to be guided by the divine hand is more valuable to you than all the world's goods. And though it may seem to you that you are doing nothing and are idle, while you remain thus, silent and surrendered, the fruit is immense.

15. Consider the donkey, blindfolded and turning the millstone; although it does not see or understand what it does, it accomplishes much by grinding the grain, and although it does not taste it, its master enjoys the fruit and flavor. Who would not think that, during the time the seed is underground, it is already lost? And yet, in the end, it is seen sprouting, growing, and multiplying. In the same way, God works within the soul when He removes consideration and words; though the soul believes it does nothing and is lost, over time it finds itself strengthened, detached, and perfected, never having expected such great fortune.

16. Make every effort, then, not to distress yourself or retreat when you cannot reason in prayer; suffer, be silent, and place yourself in the divine presence. Persevere with confidence, trusting in His infinite goodness, which will grant you steadfast faith, true light, and divine grace. Walk blindly, with your eyes covered, without thinking or reasoning; surrender yourself to His loving and paternal hands, desiring nothing other than His divine will.¹

¹ Commentary on Chapter II of Book One

In this brief chapter, Molinos articulates one of the fundamental insights of his teaching: that the soul can only find true peace and union with God when it turns inward and learns to detach itself from its own thoughts and affections—even those that appear spiritual.

Here we find a subtle yet radical warning: excessive mental activity—even when directed toward the divine—can become an obstacle. Instead of leading the soul to God, it keeps it trapped in its own movements, like a bird that, longing to fly toward the sky, never ceases to flutter its wings inside a cage. Molinos calls for a stillness

that is not inactivity, but a receptive disposition. The soul does not abandon God when it ceases to reason about Him; on the contrary, it begins to encounter Him more directly and purely, without the mediation of the intellect.

This presupposes a profound trust in the inner action of the Spirit. It is a surrender to a movement that does not originate in the self, but is welcomed in silence. The soul is likened to a mirror that, in order to reflect clearly, must remain still. If it is stirred by thoughts, desires, or even by misunderstood fervor, the image of God becomes distorted. Interior recollection, then, is not a technique but a form of humility: the recognition that the soul is not the author of union, but its guest.

The chapter also suggests a form of faith that renounces the need to “feel” or “understand” the divine presence. In this sense, Molinos anticipates a theology of abandonment, in which darkness is not the absence of God, but the very way in which He becomes present beyond all representation. This “luminous ignorance,” as another mystic called it, is not a lack, but an ineffable fullness.

Beneath these words lies a pedagogy of detachment. Molinos does not disdain discursive prayer, but he shows that when the soul is called to a different kind of experience, clinging to former practices is a resistance to grace. There is a spiritual maturity that is measured not by knowledge or feeling, but by the ability to let go—even of what was once useful and blessed.

Saint Teresa of Jesus shares this perspective when, in the *Book of Her Life*, she laments how much suffering souls can endure when, having been called to deep experiences of prayer, they fall under the guidance of confessors who have not walked that path. She herself says that an inexperienced confessor can severely hinder the soul’s progress, for he tends to distrust what he does not understand or has never lived. For Teresa, the harm lies not only in misinterpreting what is happening within the soul, but in sowing doubts and fears that paralyze it. This is why she insisted that those who receive mystical graces must seek spiritual directors who are not only learned but who have also known, at least in part, the path of contemplation.

Thus, both Molinos and Teresa understand that spiritual experience cannot be guided by purely external or rational criteria. What is needed is an inner resonance, a delicacy that does not come from study but from having traversed the desert oneself. Both authors, each in their own style, affirm that the soul does not need to be pushed, but accompanied; and that such accompaniment bears fruit only when it arises from a silence shared with God.

This chapter, with its gentle yet firm tone, reminds us that true interior freedom begins when we cease to be the masters of our spiritual journey and open ourselves unconditionally to the mystery. It is not about doing more, but about being less, so that God may be more within us.