

VIVID PRAYERS

THE COUNTER-REFORMATION AND
PURITAN-EVANGELICAL TRADITION

*“When thou settest thyself to meditate
on the joys above, think on them
boldly as Scripture hath expressed
them; bring down thy conceivings to
the reach of sense.”*

—Richard Baxter, *Saints’ Everlasting Rest*



Ignatius



Francis



Richard

BALTHASAR ON IMAGINATION IN PRAYER

“Love desires to have the beloved before its eyes. Thus the contemplative will employ the powers of his soul to summon up the image of the Beloved, the powers of his “inner senses” and his imagination to call forth the image of the incarnate Word. He will contemplate Jesus as he dwelt bodily on the earth, the things he said, the sound of his voice, the way he treated people, his appearance when at prayer, at the Last Supper, in his Passion. This picture is not meant to be a realistic photograph, but love’s picture, solely concerned with love, the divine love . . .

BALTHASAR ON IMAGINATION IN PRAYER

“of the Father, which is here manifested in the Son and in the concreteness of his whole earthly life. . . we do so in order to seek for the love of God, to see, hear and touch it in the humble form in which it offers itself to man. In prayer, our love seeks love, divine love, through the earthly image (with which it cannot dispense)” (p. 129)

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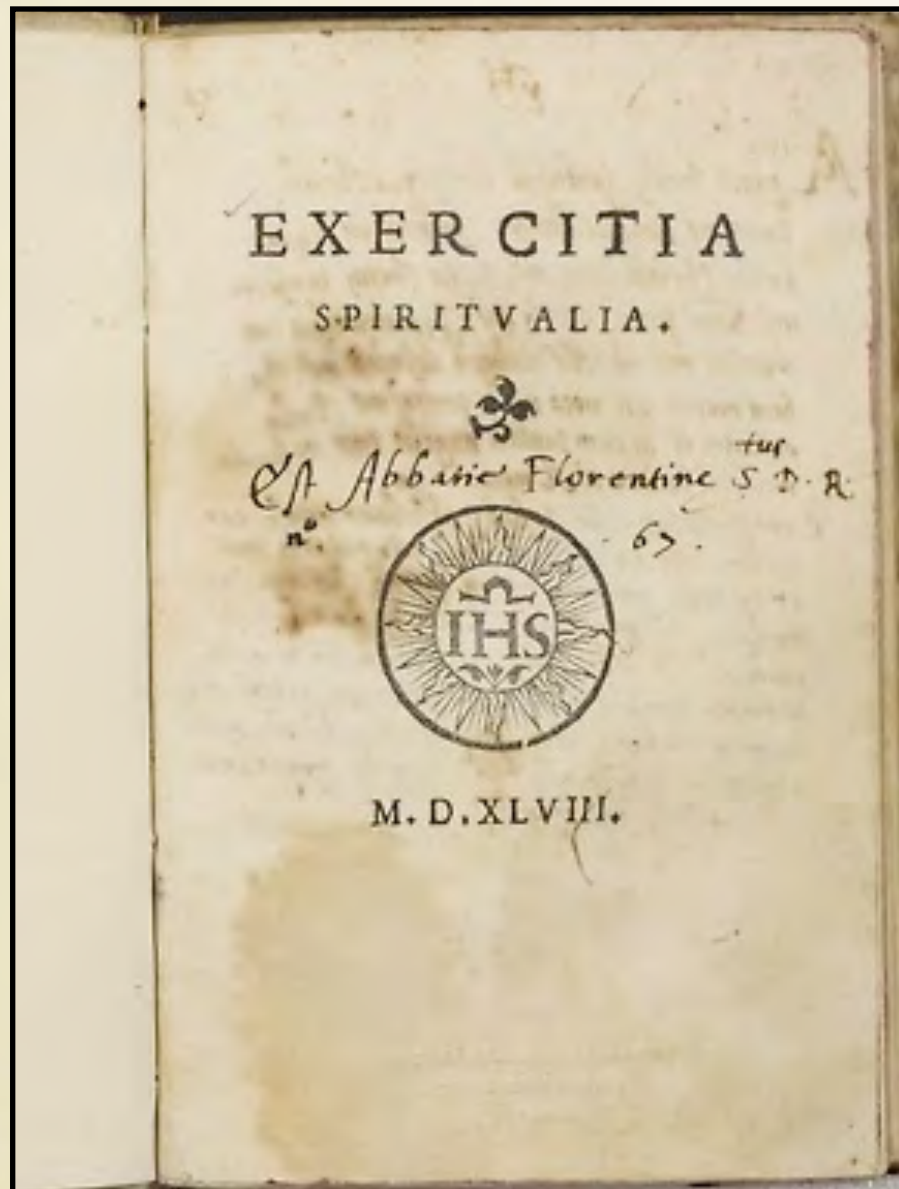
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IGNATIUS OF
LOYOLA

1491-1556



THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES (1548)



- Manual for guiding a program of intensive prayer, using the imagination
- Focussed on Christ and the Gospels
- Should lead to decisions (an 'election') about one's way of life

IGNATIAN MEDITATION

a. Preparation

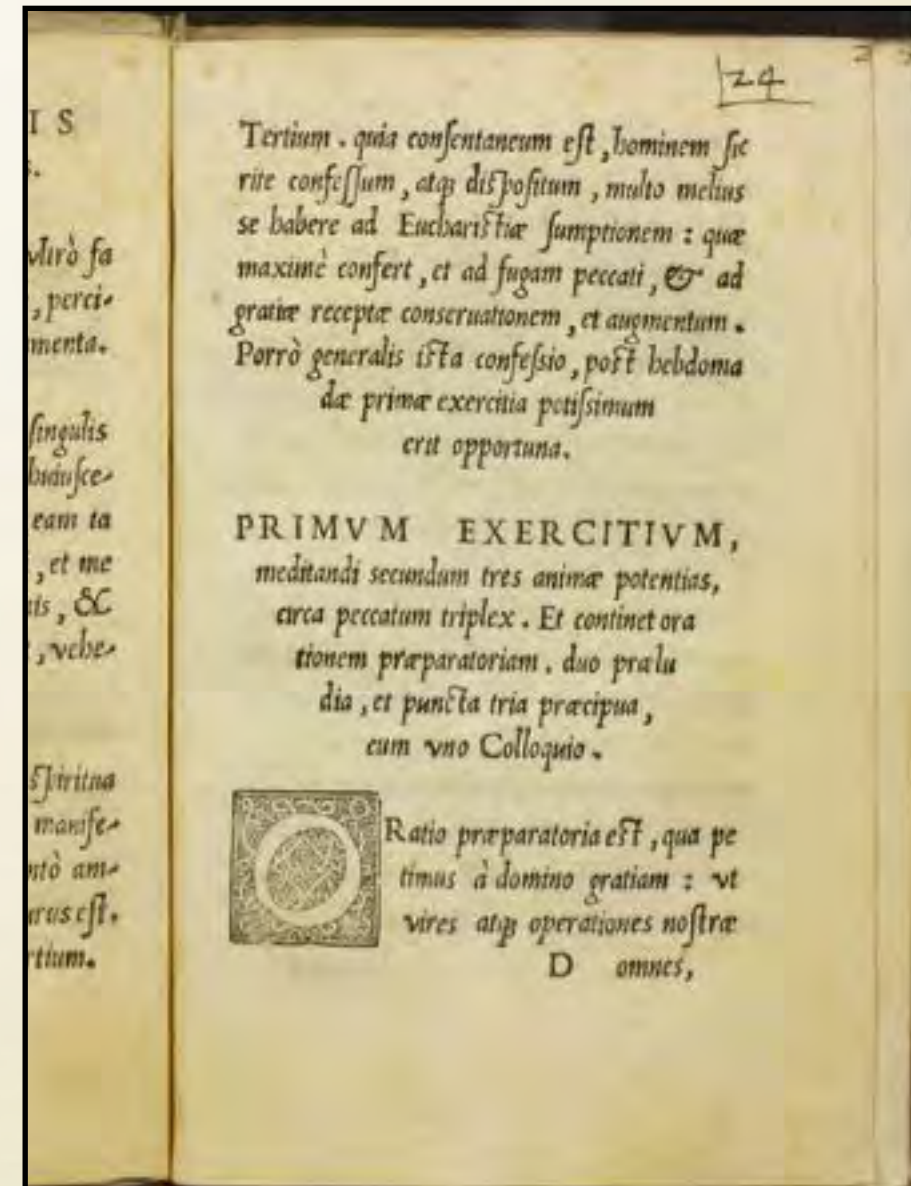
- i. prayer for purity of intention
- ii. composition of place: see and hear**
- iii. specific prayer: what do I desire?

b. Meditation by the three powers

- i. memory (**imagination**)
- ii. intellect
- iii. will

c. Colloquy

d. “Our Father”



THE COMPOSITION OF PLACE

First Prelude. The First Prelude is a composition, seeing the place.

Here it is to be noted that, in a visible contemplation or meditation—as, for instance, when one contemplates Christ our Lord, Who is visible—the composition will be to see with the sight of the imagination the corporeal place where the thing is found which I want to contemplate. I say the corporeal place, as for instance, a Temple or Mountain where Jesus Christ or our Lady is found, according to what I want to contemplate.

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**FRANCIS DE
SALES**

1567-1622



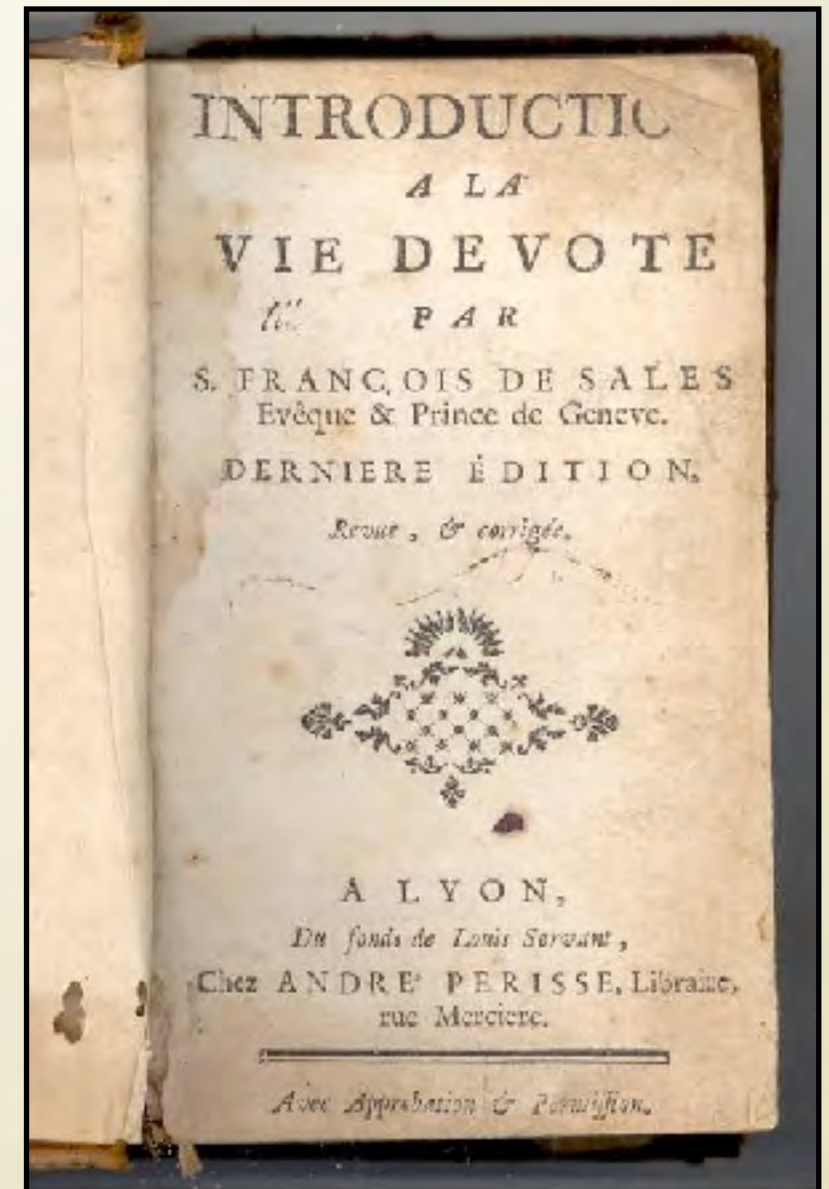
INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVOUT LIFE (1609)



- Guide for those trying to live the spiritual life in the midst of the world
- Exercises adapted from Jesuits for laypeople
- Designed to lead reader through meditation to a firm resolution to lead a devoted Christian life
- The ten meditations are “mysteries” –theological truths

SALESIAN MEDITATION

- a. Preparation
 - i. place yourself in God's presence
 - ii. invocation
 - iii. composition of place or interior lesson: the subject of the mystery (memory/imagination)**
- b. Considerations (intellect): the meditation proper
- c. Affections and Resolutions (will)
- d. Conclusion
 - i. thanksgiving, offering, supplication, "Our Father", etc., "devotional bouquet"



THE COMPOSITION OF PLACE

CHAPTER IV. The Third Point of Preparation, representing the Mystery to be meditated to Your Imagination.

It is simply kindling a vivid picture of the mystery to be meditated within your imagination, even as though you were actually beholding it. For instance, if you wish to meditate upon our Lord on His Cross, you will place yourself in imagination on Mount Calvary, as though you saw and heard all that occurred there during the Passion.

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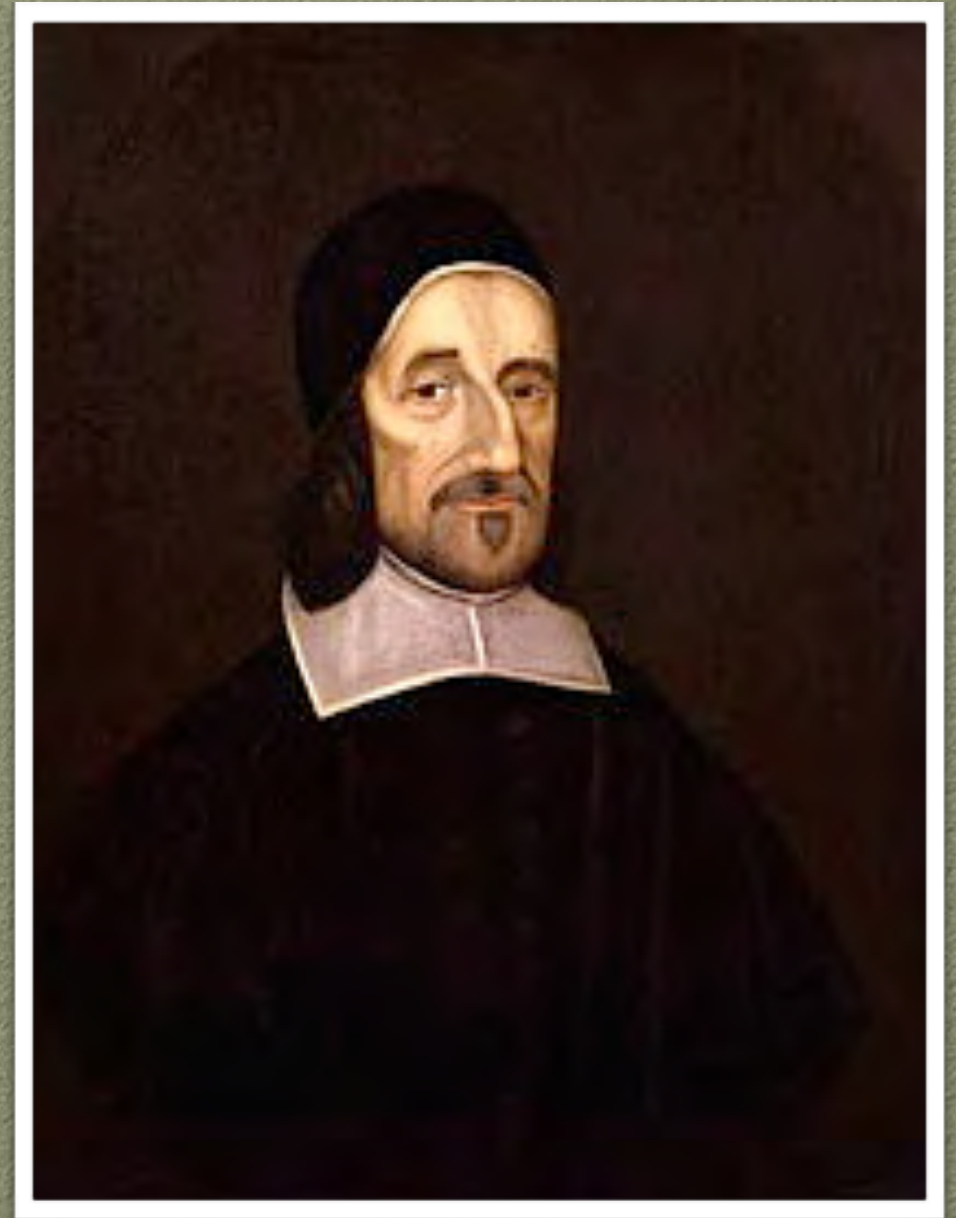
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MAKING A COMPOSITION IN THE READING OF THE GOSPELS

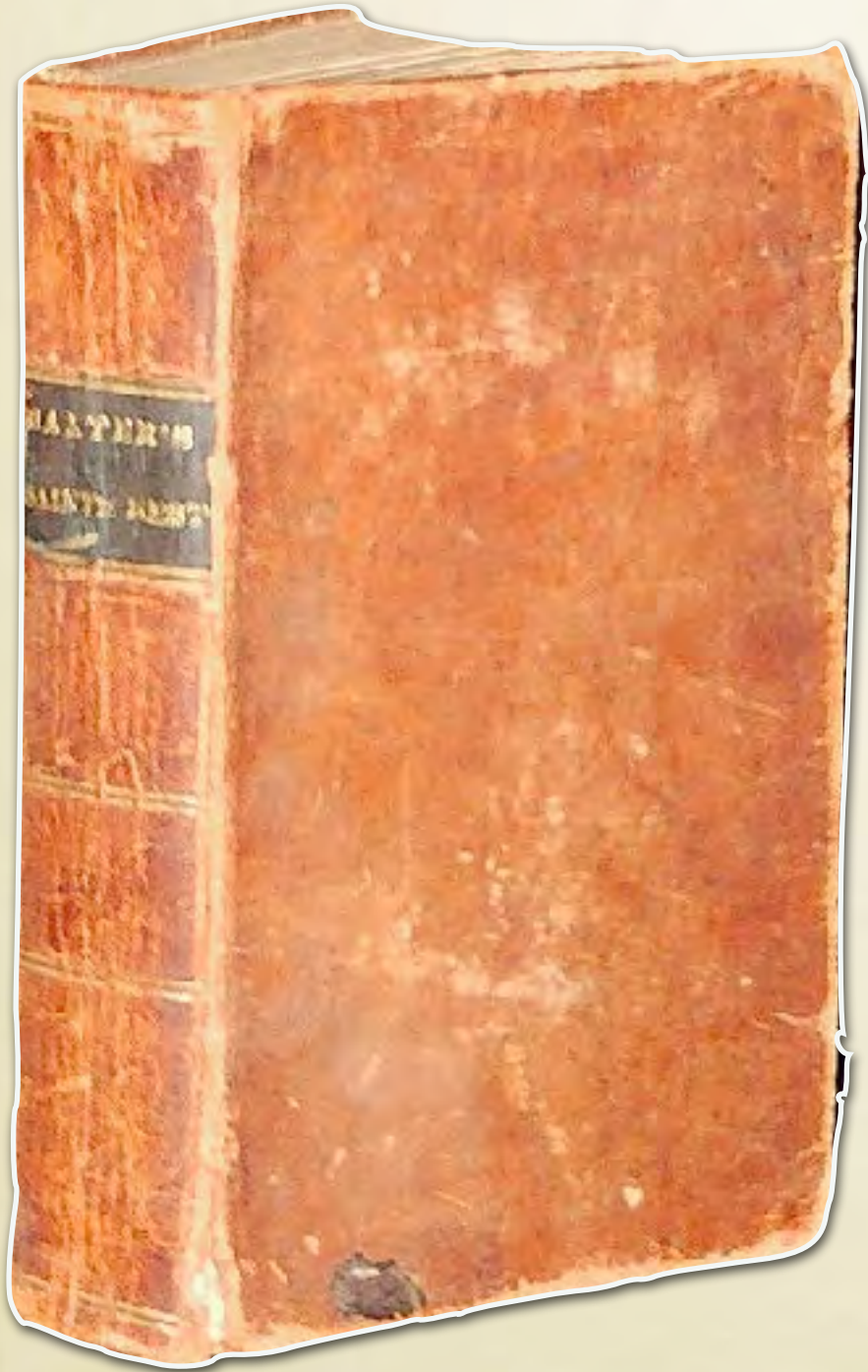
- What do I see? (look around the scene, and especially at what Jesus is doing and saying)
- What do I hear? (listen to the sounds and hear each voice, especially the voice of Jesus)
- What do I feel or touch, smell or taste? What emotions do I feel?
- What person may I identify with, so that I may hear Jesus words or receive his actions as directed to me? How am I in need of healing (like the bleeding woman), or thirsty (like the Samaritan woman), or hungry (like the crowds), or helpless (like Jairus or Peter sinking on the water), etc.? What does Jesus do? How does he turn to me? What does he say? What do I say to him? What does he say to me here and now? What do I say to him here and now?
- What do I take away from this encounter with Jesus into my life today?

RICHARD
BAXTER

1615-91



SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST (1650)



- Out of the English Civil War, weary of strife in church and state, and weary of his own illness.
- "Living in continual expectation of death, I bent my thoughts on my everlasting rest. . . . I took my pen and began to draw up my own funeral sermon; or some helps for my own meditation of Heaven."

*‘The sense is the natural way to the
Imagination, and that to the
Understanding: And he that will have
not sensible and natural pleasure,
shall have not spiritual pleasure’*

-Richard Baxter, Saints’ Everlasting Rest

PURITAN MEDITATION

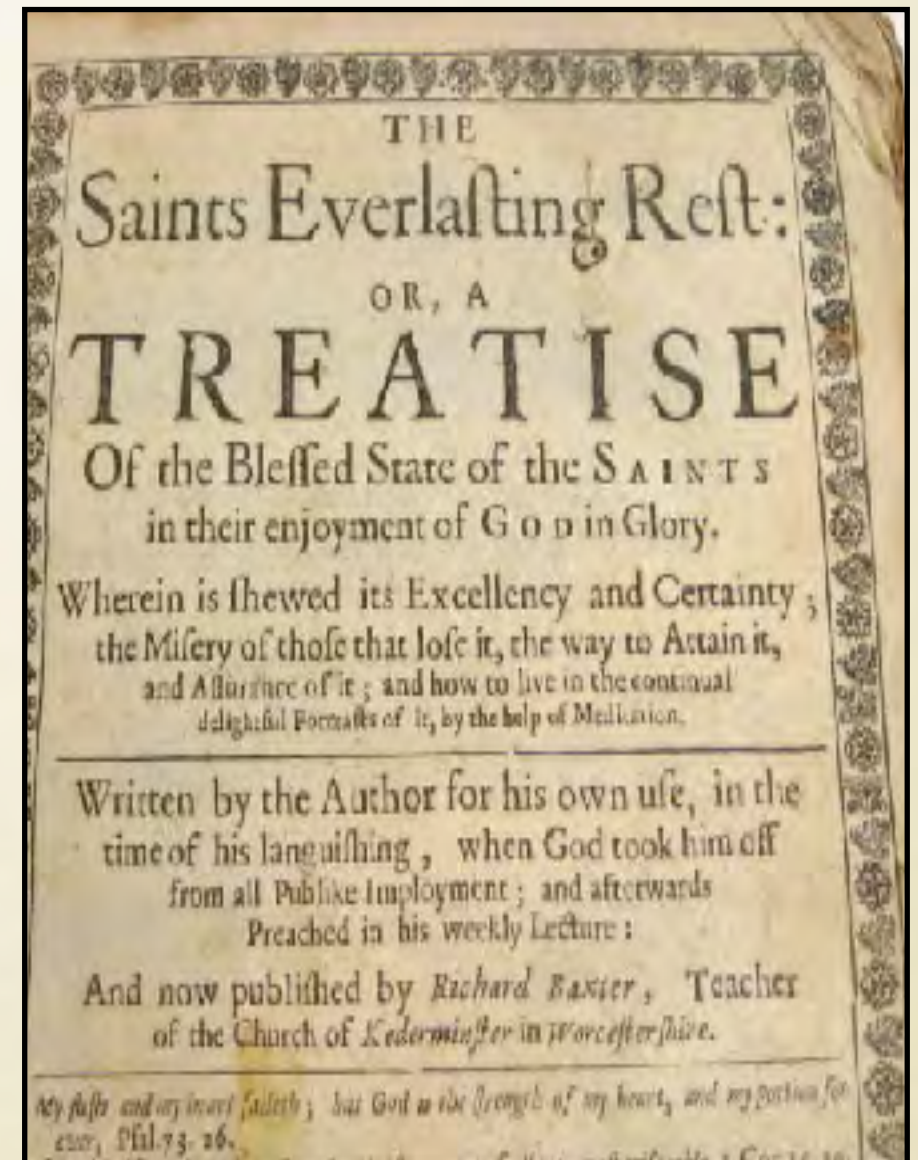
contemplation: “the set and solemn acting of all the powers of the soul upon this most perfect object.”

“the understanding must take in truths, and prepare them for the will, and it must receive them and commend them to the affections”

“the great instrument that this work is done by is . . . reasoning the case with yourselves [or] consideration.”

soliloquy: “nothing but a pleading of the case with our souls”

“It will be a point of our spiritual prudence, and a singular help to furthering the work of faith, to call in our sense [imagination] to its assistance”



THE COMPOSITION OF PLACE

“Therefore put Christ no further from you, than he hath put himself, lest the divine nature be again inaccessible. Think of Christ, as in our own glorified nature. Think of glorified saints, as men made perfect. Suppose thyself a companion of John in his survey of the New Jerusalem, and viewing the thrones, the majesty, the heavenly host, the shining splendour which he saw. Suppose thyself his fellow-traveller into the celestial kingdom, and that thou hadst seen all the saints in white robes with palms in their hands, and that thou hadst heard those songs of Moses, and of the Lamb. If thou hadst really seen and heard these things, in what a rapture wouldst thou have been? And the more seriously thou puttest this supposition to thyself, the more will thy meditation elevate thy heart. Do not, like the papists, draw them in pictures; but get the liveliest picture of them in thy mind that thou possibly canst, by contemplating the scripture account of them, till thou canst say, ‘Me thinks I see a glimpse of glory!’”

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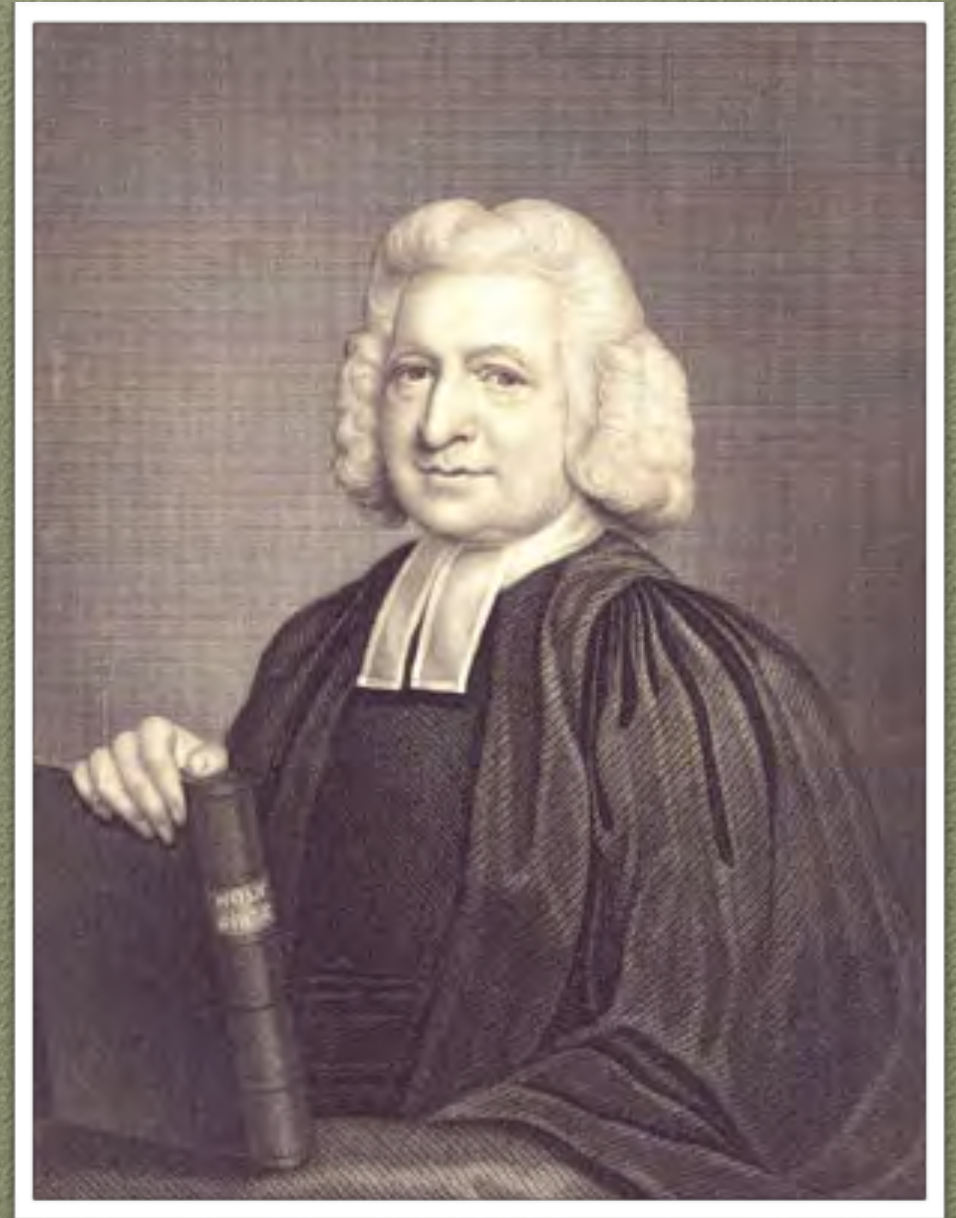
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**TWO MORE EXAMPLES
FROM THE EVANGELICAL
TRADITION**

**CHARLES WESLEY AND
JOHN NEWTON**

CHARLES WESLEY

1707-88



*These Things were written for our In-
struction.*

I.

JESU, if still Thou art to Day
As Yesterday the same,
Present to heal, in me display
The Virtue of Thy Name.

II.

If still Thou go'st about, to do
Thy needy Creatures Good,
On me, that I Thy Praise may shew,
Be all Thy Wonders shew'd.

III.

Now, Lord, to whom for Help I call,
Thy Miracles repeat;
With pitying Eyes behold me fall
A Leper at Thy Feet.

IV.

Loathsome, and foul, and self-abhor'd,
I sink beneath my Sin;
But if Thou wilt, a gracious Word
Of Thine can make me clean.

V.

Thou see'st me deaf to Thy Commands,
Open, O LORD, my Ear;
Bid me stretch out my wither'd Hands,
And lift them up in Prayer.

VI. Silent,

VI.

* Silent, (alas Thou know'st how long)
My Voice I cannot raise;
But O! when Thou shalt loose my Tongue,
The Dumb shall sing Thy Praise.

VII.

Lame at the Pool I still am found:
Give; and my Strength employ;
Light as a Hart I then shall bound,
The Lame shall leap for Joy.

VIII.

Blind from my Birth to Guilt, and Thee,
And dark I am within,
The Love of God I cannot see,
The Sinfulness of Sin.

IX.

But Thou, they say, art passing by;
O let me find Thee near:
JESUS, in Mercy hear my Cry!
Thou Son of *David* hear!

X.

Long have I waited in the Way
For Thee the Heavenly Light;
Command me to be brought, and say,
Sinner, receive thy Sight.

XI.

While dead in Trespasses I lie,
The quick'ning Spirit give;
Call me, Thou Son of God, that I
May hear Thy Voice, and live.

XII. While

While full of
My weak
Thy Love
O let it r

While torn
By Legion
Son of the L
And speak

Cast out Th
To JESU
Cloath with
And place

To JESU'S
A tremblin
O let my stub
My Stiff-n

Impotent, du
And sick, a
But sure a Res
For all in J

I know in Th
And all for v
Fill every Wan
And break of

**JOHN
NEWTON**

1725-1807



“Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?”

—King David (1 Chronicles 17: 16)

*“Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound)
That sav’d a wretch like me!”*

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Meditation on our creation

-Adapted from Francis de Sales

Meditation from the Gospels

Discerning Jesus Presence in Deep Water
Matthew 14: 22-33

-After the Ignatian pattern

MATTHEW 14: 22-33

22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; **it is I**. Do not be afraid."

28 And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, [e] he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

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THINKING CRITICALLY

PRAYER AND THE IMAGINATION

- What governs or constrains the imagination in engaging the text of Scripture? How is it not “anything goes”? What prevents me from “hearing” what I want to hear?
- Put differently, how does the public meaning of the bible, as faithful taught, provide boundaries for my contemplation and colloquy (conversation with God)?

“None of this implies that the experience of God is the experience of the imagination. In fact, it should be clear that the spiritual impact of inner sense cultivation is not simply the result of the use of internal sensation. . . . They are techniques of hyperattention.

-T. M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*