Before launching into this study of Simone Weil (1909-1943), it is important that I first introduce her to you. She was born in Paris into a family apparently socially secure (her father was a doctor), and was raised in complete agnosticism. Though her ancestors were Jewish, the faith they had essentially disappeared in her immediate family; thus Simone grew up with a feeling of belonging quite firmly to a world whose values were simply “French” — that is to say, a combination of Greek and secularized Christianity. In spite of her secularized upbringing, she was a virgin of impeccable character; she believed in sexual purity and all of virtues of the Christian faith. Even as a young child, she was somewhat perplexing to her parents, to whom being comfortable was an important end of life. At the age of five, she refused to eat sugar, as long as the soldiers at the front in First World War were not able to get it — the war had brought the sense of human misery into her secure little world for the first time, and her response was to deny herself what the most unfortunate were unable to enjoy. A few years later in her childhood, she declared that she would no longer wear socks while the children of the laboring class had to go without them. Throughout her life, Simone strongly identified with the sufferings of others and the most exploited groups in society. Before continuing this introduction of Simone, you might want to take a look at the pictures of her that I have placed at the end of this study.

The root of Simone’s troubles seem to have been strongly influenced by her relationship with her older brother Andre, a mathematical prodigy, beside whose brilliance she felt herself stumbling and stupid. Andre was three years older than Simone. Even her later academic successes and the almost universal respect that she received never seemed to convince her that she possessed a very uncommon intellectual talent. She was an avid reader at the age of six, and by that time she could already quote passages of Racine by heart. As a young woman, Weil had a good grasp of ancient Greek philosophy (Plato was a favorite of hers), Greek mythology and Hinduism… had mastered the languages of Greek, Sanskrit, English & French, and had a working knowledge of several other languages. Although her studies were constantly interrupted by the First World War, she obtained her baccalaureate es letters with distinction in 1924 at just fifteen years of age. Following graduation she had as her master for two years, the well-known French philosopher and essayist Emile-Auguste Chartier at College Henri IV — he recognized Weil as a “philosophical genius” and saw “a power of thought in her that was extremely rare.” Essentially, philosophy is a “logical explanation of reality” — whereas some people have an inherent appreciation for logic, others find it more difficult. In 1928, at the age of nineteen, Weil entered the prestigious Ecole Normale Superieure and in 1931 became one of its first female graduates — she left the school as a qualified teacher of philosophy and was appointed to the distinguished secondary school for girls at Le Puy. In spite of her migraine headaches and delicate health (with which she had to contend her entire life), she decided to take a year’s leave of absence so she could fully experience the life of the common laborer. Over the next few years she taught at various schools and felt it important to emerge herself in the struggles of the Republican Army; all the while struggling with her fragile health. In 1940, at the age of 31 she decided to leave Paris and move to Marseilles, where she was introduced to the head of the Dominican Convent, Father Perrin. By that time her mystical preoccupation with the “notion of God” had become
more pronounced, and she found in Father Perrin a friend in whom she could confide and share her thoughts and perspectives regarding spiritual issues.

Before launching into Weil’s theological thoughts, let me first share some of her philosophical thoughts about the world as she saw it. She lived a life of self-imposed isolation and seemed to despair of the violence and desolation in the world. Politically, she believed the American parties (Democrats and Republicans) were becoming more like what European political parties used to be. In Weimar Germany or the French Third Republic, a Socialist or a Communist or a Catholic Centrist was not someone who voted for a certain candidate, but someone who belonged to a certain community—often one with its own housing projects, newspapers, trade unions, and youth groups. And the interwar years showed the world what could happen when a political party burst the bounds of parliamentary politics and became a totalitarian movement, as happened with the Nazi Party in Germany and the Communist Party in Russia. At such a historical moment, the party no longer seemed like a tool of democracy, but like democracy’s cancer. In 1943 at the height of World War II and just weeks before her death, Simone Weil produced an essay titled “On the Abolition of All Political Parties.” In her all-out assault on parties, she reminds us, paradoxically, of why parties, for all their flaws, remain crucial to a functioning democracy. Whereas English and American parties retain an “element of sport” (of friendly competition among equals), she said… “French or German parties, by contrast, are not content to be one of many, but seek for total power.” The task of government, she says, is to express the “general will” of a society—this general will is the true and just desire of the people, purged of any malicious private interest. It can be determined by heeding the consensus that emerges from honest public discussion, in which “individual passions will neutralize one another and act as mutual counterweights.” Crucial to this process is the assumption that, “reason is identical in all men, whereas their passions most often differ.” Cancel out the passions, and what is left will be reason, justice, the truth. “All men converge on what is just and true, whereas mendacity [given to deception] and crime make them diverge without end.”

Politics conceived in this way obviously has no place for political parties, which cultivate the kind of “collective passions” that can distort decision-making. If people no longer seek the truth in their deliberations, but only try to advance a party agenda, then the general will cannot emerge and justice cannot be done. That is Weil’s first argument against parties—they prevent democracy from finding out the true, correct solutions to problems. Her second argument is that parties necessarily corrupt the souls of their members. She writes, “Political parties are organizations that are publicly and officially designed for the purpose of killing in all souls the sense of truth and of justice.” The member of a party delegates his conscience to the party, accepting its verdict on all political and moral questions; a person will do “as a Communist” or “as a Nazi” things that he would never do as himself. Once again, Weil brings the discussion back to the question of truth—she said, “independent thought necessarily seeks the truth.” It is only when one stops searching for truth and starts calculating partisan advantage that one falls into what Weil calls “inner darkness.” Truth exists somewhere “out there,” she said, and our job is to look for it. There is a “right answer” to every political question, which every individual, and society as a whole, would necessarily discover if we approached it with pure hearts. Parties, by intervening between the individual and the truth, frustrate this quest; they stifle the conscience and confuse the mind. Democracy only works if our loyalty to the collective is more powerful than our insistence on our own righteousness. When righteousness and loyalty cannot be reconciled, democracy fails, and the only resort is to violence (as was the case regarding the issue of
slavery). Parties ought to help avert that kind of apocalyptic conflict, by forming coalition in support of political consensus. The more ideologically embittered our parties become, the greater the danger we face [of turning our parties into vehicles of partisan advantage where truth is of secondary importance]. Let me add the following: the issue of “truth” is a difficult one for the Christian community to deal with when it runs contrary to what the unbelieving world believes… in the same way “truth” is difficult for the non-believing community to accept when it is antithetical to its secular values and beliefs — the truth is, there is a strong reluctance to compromise once the passions of the soul have been ignited (it is very difficult to quiet them). With that said, let’s return again to the main focus of this study — theological truth.

When Father Perrin was chosen as Superior at Montpellier in 1942, he did not lose contact with Weil — they kept on meeting, writing letters, and exchanging views right up to the time she left France for America about three months later… where she continued to correspond with him by letters. Some six months after arriving in America, Weil received a call to serve under the French provisional government in London, where she was commissioned to make a study on the rights and duties of the State and the individual under the title “The Need for Roots.” Because she insisted on sharing the hardship of her French compatriots, she refused the extra nourishment ordered by her doctors, and only ate the rations that those fighting in the occupied zone were limited to. Weil strongly felt that one must place him or herself on the side of the oppressed to feel with them, if they are to understand. Ultimately the state of her health became so severe that she was transferred to a sanatorium at Ashford, and just two days later she died at the age of 34. Although she had contracted tuberculosis, the cause of her death was ruled a suicide; rest and overeating were the only known treatments for consumption at that time, and it was strongly felt that Weil would have survived if she had simply followed the doctor’s orders.

Although Weil was Jewish, when she was about 27 years old she began visiting the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes in France — she spent considerable time there when it was empty and silent. In her writings she states that it was at that point that Christ inhabited her soul and allowed her to see through His eyes. Weil saw Jesus as the perfect model of affliction. She believed God’s love was so great that it journeyed across space and time to draw us closer to Him. If we refuse God’s love, she said, “God would come back again and again like a beggar.” Weil, like most mystics, led an extreme life with a radical commitment to her beliefs. As she often said, “There should not be the slightest discrepancy between one’s thoughts and one’s way of life.” Given her absolutism, obsession with suffering and glorification of self-emptying love, it seems that her life could only find fulfillment in a sacrificial death. Incidentally, a “Christian mystic” attributes an unmediated spiritual experience of knowing God, directly to God. It is important to note that Christian mysticism has nothing to do with magic, clairvoyance, parapsychology, visions or new revelations. It appears to be a level of special enlightenment in the soul of someone who has truly humbled himself before God, and of whom Christ alone is his or her life. To them it is not an alien or strange experience, but simply a deep, inner conviction of the truth that God has poured into their soul. Remember, “truth in the soul is always the inspired work of the Holy Spirit” — it is not the product of our own thoughts (cf. Jn 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13). My thinking is a mystical experience is not as uncommon in the minds and hearts of God’s faithful stewards as some believe. Protestants generally mistrust a mystical experience, and accept only a “rational theology” that comes about through the teaching of Scripture (which certainly needs to be the “foundation” of our theology)… so they prefer only a “Reformation faith piety” or prophetic spirituality to mystical contemplation. Obviously, if the resultant effect of a mystical experi-
ence leads one to believe in some “extra-biblical revelation” (i.e., a revelation of some truth on which Scripture is silent), according to Scripture any such teaching is to clearly be rejected (cf. Acts 17:11; 1 Tim 3:15-16; 1 Cor 4:1; Eph 3:10; 2 Pet 1:3; 1 Jn 4:1); that’s the way “cults” evolve. Does that mean that God cannot mystically communicate in some way to the heart of an individual? No, absolutely not. God is still GOD, and it is His divine prerogative to do as He chooses, but such communication is clearly not the norm (which could be due to the fact that there are very few individuals truly sold out to Christ in this world). What is critical regarding this matter of mysticism is the need to confirm with Scripture any “revelation or insight” that such a person might teach or receive; because above all, Scripture is the final authority for the Christian world regarding truth (be sure to read the passages listed above). I have addressed this matter of “Christian mysticism” in considerably more detail in my study on “Saint John of the Cross.”

So who is this incredible woman whose spiritual insights you are about to read? What do her critics and admirers say about her? The irreligious feel she wasted her life. Conversely, T. S. Eliot writes, “We must simply expose ourselves to the personality of a woman of genius, of a kind of genius akin to that of the saints.” Likewise, Albert Camus calls Weil, “the only great spirit of our time.” How did I come to know Simone Weil? through the reading of a devotional book titled, “A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants” (published by The Upper Room). After reading several inspiring devotionals by her, I decided to read her book “Waiting for God.” Needless to say, it was a very challenging read. Few people have been blessed with the mind that God blessed this young woman with, and even fewer people have been given the ability to communicate spiritual truths like she was able to do. It is hard to understand how a woman so young could have had such a breadth of understanding, and the ability to articulate it to others. It must be assumed that God graciously breathed incredible wisdom into her soul. Though some question whether Weil was truly born again (for various reasons), her insights, wisdom, convictions and humility suggest to me that she probably was a child of God. Though every one of her thoughts would not be doctrinally defensible (many believers suffer from serious incongruities with regard to their faith), I don’t believe her being a mystic or her errors in judgment disqualify her from being a Spirit-filled believer. It seems that only those in the evangelical community who insist on dotting every “i” and crossing every “t,” question the integrity of her faith. Ultimately the issue is whether or not God had chosen to take up residence in her life and do a transforming work in her heart. Remember, none of us start at the top (fully mature). When one genuinely reflects upon all Weil wrote, he discovers an uncommon spiritual manna feeding his soul. Though some of you will be inclined to argue with her at various points along the way (as I was prone to do), let me suggest that you hear her out, and let the Holy Spirit bring an encouraging breath of fresh air to some aspect of your faith. One further note — many of the following insights from Weil, will often appear to be disjointed, isolated statements; that’s how many of her thoughts are recorded. Simply reflect upon each of them independently and then move on to the next one. Most of the material in this study comes from her book, “Waiting for God” (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1951).

The Beginning of Simone’s Journey

In eight short years, this young French-woman had come to possess the imagination of many in the Western world — Catholic and Protestant, Christian and Jew, agnostic and devout. Like Kierkegaard, she preached the paradox of its being easier for a non-Christian to become a
Christian, than for a “Christian” to become one (many scholars have come to that same conclusion). For those to whom religion means comfort and peace of mind, Weil brings the terrible reminder that Christ did not promise peace but a sword (cf. Mt 10:34). She always considered that her chief mission was to those still “submerged in materialism,” that is, to those who lived in a chaotic and disenchanted world. She rejected the temptation to withdraw into a congenial group, and once wrote, “I feel it is necessary for me, that it is prescribed for me, to be alone, an outsider and alienated from every human context whatsoever.” The greatest of virtues, she believed, was to “uproot oneself” for the sake of one’s neighbors and of God — “It is necessary to uproot oneself; cut down the tree and make a cross and carry it forever after” (cf. Mt 16:24). Toward the end of her life she wrote that she was never able to read the parable of the “barren fig tree” (Mt 21:19) without a shudder, seeing in the figure always a possible portrait of herself, naturally impotent, and yet somehow, in the inscrutable plan of God.

Weil said that she knelt to pray for the first time in 1937 (when she was 28 years old) at the shrine in Assisi, when she began saying the Pater Noster (our Father) daily with so special a concentration, apparently at each repetition “Christ Himself descended upon her and took her.” Of her first mystical experience she writes, “God in his mercy had prevented me from reading the mystics, so that it should be evident to me that I had not invented this absolutely unexpected contact” (cf. Jn 6:37, 44, 65). Afterward, Weil found in St. John of the Cross an account of an encounter very similar to her own. Following her first mystical union, her inner existence became much more important than anything that superficially happened to her. What Weil considered to be the truth most necessary to one’s salvation was this — “It is God who seeks man” (cf. Lk 19:10; Jn 1:13).

**Importance of Looking**

It has been argued that Weil was not a “systematic thinker,” but a “conceptual thinker;” hence, many of her thoughts and insights are intertwined with each other (especially in her letters to Father Perrin), so much of the following material will be presented in much the same manner. With that said, let me begin with one of her favorite spiritual ideals: “The great trouble in human life,” she says, “is that looking and eating are two very different operations… only beyond the sky, in the country inhabited by God, are they one and the same.” Here below we must be content to be “eternally hungry”… for “it is the sole proof we have of the reality of God who is the only sustenance that can satisfy us.” The danger is not that the soul should doubt whether there is any bread [God], but that “it should persuade itself that it is not hungry.” Incidentally, it can only persuade itself of this by lying, for the reality of its hunger is not a belief, but a “certainty.” It is in admitting that one is hungry (true humility), and not eating of what is forbidden, that one experiences the miracle of salvation. Though Eve was hungry the moment she beheld the fruit, if in spite of that fact she had remained looking at it indefinitely without taking one step toward it, “she would have performed a miracle analogous to that of perfect friendship” (more on the subject of friendship later). It is “looking” which saves, writes Weil, not “eating.” True religion is nothing else but a looking — “Looking is the mere turning of the head toward God” — it is equated by Weil with desire, and that passive effort of “waiting for God” (from whence comes the title of her book). Conversely, Eating is equated with the will (Jn 1:13), and the false muscular effort to seize that which can only be freely given.
Man’s “free will” consists in nothing but the ability to turn, or to refuse to turn, his eyes toward what God holds up before him. Writes Weil, “One of the principal truths of Christianity, a truth that goes almost unrecognized today, is that looking is what is what saves us.” The bronze serpent was lifted up so that those who lay maimed in the depths of degradation should be saved by looking upon it (cf. Num 21:8-9). Jesus affirmed this truth to the children of Israel when He said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life” (Jn 3:14-15). What we really want is “above us,” not ahead of us, says Weil. “It is not in our power to travel in a vertical direction. If however we look heavenward for a long time, God comes and takes us up.” We are free only to change the direction of our glance… we cannot rise without being “lifted by grace” (cf. Acts 16:14). He whose soul remains ever “turned toward God,” finds himself “at the intersection of the arms of the Cross.” At the cross, deceit is no longer possible… it is at the cross where we are forced to “recognize as real what we would not even have believed possible,” and having yielded ourselves in love to spiritual poverty, we are ready for the final gesture of obedience — “the surrender of the last vestiges of selfhood.”

### Concerning the Will of God

In her first letter to Father Perrin, Weil writes: “I have been wondering lately about the will of God, what it means, and how we can reach the point of conforming ourselves to it completely. I believe we have to distinguish among “three domains” — first, that which is absolutely independent of us; beyond our reach. In this domain everything that comes about is in accordance with the will of God, without any exception. It is here that we must love absolutely everything, as a whole and in each detail (including the existence and presence of evil). In other words, we must feel the reality and presence of God through all external things without exception. The second domain is that which is placed under the rule of the will — it includes the things that are purely natural and easily recognized by our minds and imagination, and among which we can make our choice. In this domain we have to carry out everything that appears clearly to be a duty (obligation). The third domain is that of the things, which, without being under the empire of the will, are yet not entirely independent of us. In this domain we experience the compulsion of God’s pressure… God rewards the soul that thinks of Him with attention and love. We have to abandon ourselves to the pressure. We must go on thinking about God with ever increasing love and attentiveness… becoming the object of a pressure that possesses an ever-growing proportion of the whole soul. When the pressure has taken possession of the whole soul, we have attained the state of perfection [because of indwelling sin (flesh), however, it cannot be attained in an absolute sense in this life].

Regarding the nature of the “sacraments” — they involve a certain kind of contact with God; a real but mysterious contact. At the same time they have a purely human value in so far as they are symbols or ceremonies; I believe most believers approach the sacraments only as symbols and ceremonies. A social and human participation in the symbols and ceremonies of the sacraments is an excellent and healthy thing in that it marks a stage of the journey for those who travel that way. Because of my shameful faults and complete inadequacy I consider myself unworthy of the sacraments. I do not say this out of humility, for if I possessed the virtue of humility, the most beautiful of all the virtues, perhaps I would not be in this miserable state of inadequacy. It is “my state of imperfection” that keeps me outside the Church (that is, that keeps me from
submitting to baptism and membership in the Church). I cannot get rid of my inhibition except by grace. If it is God’s will that I should enter the [physical] Church (by submitting to the sacrament of baptism; i.e., the Roman Catholic Church), I believe God will impose this will upon me; if it is not His will that I should enter it, how could I [then choose to] enter it? It seems to me that the will of God is that I should not enter the Church at present. I cannot help still wondering whether in these days when so large a proportion of humanity is submerged in “materialism,” that God wants there to be some men and women who have given themselves to him and to Christ and who yet remain outside the Church. I have the essential need, and I think I can say the vocation, to move among men of every class and complexion, mixing with them and sharing their life, so far that is to say as conscience allows, merging in among them so that they show themselves as they are, putting off all disguises with me. It is because I long to know them so as to love them just as they are; for if I do not love them as they are, it will not be they whom I love, and my love will be unreal. Keeping that in mind, “I do not think that I should ever enter a religious order, because that would separate me from ordinary people.”

I know quite well that Christ said, “Whoever shall deny [i.e., disown] Me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is heaven” (Mt 10:33) — but disowning Christ does not perhaps mean for everyone and in all cases not [formally] belonging to the [physical] Church. The truth is, writes Weil, “I love God, Christ, and the Catholic faith as much as it is possible for so miserably inadequate a creature to love them. I love the saints through their writings and what is told of their lives. I love the seven Catholics of genuine spirituality whom chance has led me to meet in the course of my life. I love the Catholic liturgy, hymns, architecture, rites, and ceremonies. But I have not the slightest love for the Church in the strict sense of the word, apart from its relation to all these things that I do love. I am capable of sympathizing with those who have this love, but I do not feel it. I am well aware that all the “saints” felt it, but then they were nearly all born and brought up in the Church [Weil explains her need to remain detached from the Church in the next paragraph]. All that I can say is that if such a love constitutes a condition of spiritual progress, which I am unaware of, or if it is part of my vocation, I desire that it may one day be granted to me. [With that said,] I have reached a conclusion to stop thinking about the question of my eventual entry into the [physical] Church (by submitting to the sacrament of baptism). It is very possible that one day I shall suddenly feel an irresistible impulse to ask immediately for baptism and I shall run to ask for it. For the action of grace in our hearts is secret and silent. It may also be that my life will come to an end before I have ever felt this impulse. It is not my business to think about myself — my business is to think about God; it is for God to think about me [and everything He would have me to do].

What frightens me is the Church as a social structure; not only on account of its blemishes, but from the very fact that it is something social. It is not that I am of a very individualistic temperament; [the truth is] I am aware of very strong gregarious tendencies in myself. My natural disposition is to be very easily influenced, and above all by anything collective. In the ordinary course of life one has to know his or her weaknesses, prudently take them into account, and strive to turn them to good purpose. I am afraid of the Church patriotism that exists in Catholic circles… I am afraid of it because I fear to catch it. There were some saints who approved of the Crusades or the Inquisition; I cannot help thinking that they were in the wrong. I cannot go against the light of conscience (cf. Rom 14:22-23). I must admit that in this matter they were blinded by something very powerful — this something was the Church seen as a social structure. If this social structure did them harm, what harm would it not do me, who am particularly susceptible
to social influences and am almost infinitely more feeble than they were? Nothing ever said or written goes so far as the devil’s words to Christ concerning the kingdoms of the world—“All this power will I give Thee and the glory of it, for that is delivered unto me and to whomsoever I will give it” (cf. Mt 4:9). It follows from this that the social is irremediably the domain of the devil. [Thus] I feel that it is necessary and ordained that I should be alone, a stranger and an exile in relation to every human circle without exception…. I want nothing else but obedience [to Christ], obedience itself, in its totality, that is to say even to the Cross.

Weil’s Spiritual Autobiography

In May 1942, the year before Weil died, she wrote a letter to Father Perrin that she called her “spiritual autobiography.” In it she said: I told you that I owed you an enormous debt… though you neither brought me the Christian inspiration nor did you bring me to Christ; for when I met you there was no longer any need; it had been done without the intervention of any human being. [In truth] never at any moment in my life did I “seek for God”… I saw the problem of God as a problem the data of which could not be obtained here below. It seemed to me useless to solve the problem, for I thought that, being in this world, our business was to adopt the best attitude with regard to the problems of this world. I always adopted the Christian attitude as the only possible one. I used to think that those who live as they should, in an infinitesimal fraction of time, pure truth would enter their soul. At the age of fourteen I fell into one of those fits of bottomless despair… what grieved me was the idea of being excluded from that transcendent kingdom to which only the truly great have access and wherein truth abides. I preferred to die rather than live without that truth. After months of inward darkness, I suddenly had the everlasting conviction that any human being, even though practically devoid of natural faculties, can penetrate to the kingdom of truth… if only he longs for truth and perpetually concentrates all his attention upon its attainment. [Ultimately] for me it was a question of a conception of the relationship between grace and desire. The conviction came to me that when one hungers for bread one does not receive stones; but at the same time I had not read the Gospel.

As for the spirit of poverty, I do not remember any moment when it was not in me. I fell in love with Saint Francis of Assisi as soon as I came to know about him. From my earliest childhood I always had the Christian idea of love for one’s neighbor; [though] on this point I have failed seriously several times. The duty of acceptance in all that concerns the will of God, whatever it may be, was impressed upon my mind as the first and most necessary of all duties from the time when I read about it in the Stoics. The idea of purity took possession of me at the age of sixteen. My conception of life had always been Christian, and I always had an extremely severe standard for intellectual honesty… and am always afraid of failing in it. I had three contacts with Catholicism that really counted — in the early 1930s (at about the age of 22), I had my first contact with “affliction,” and it killed my youth. I knew quite well that there was a great deal of affliction in the world (I was obsessed with the idea), but I had not had a prolonged or firsthand experience of it. It was at this time that the affliction of others entered into my soul and I found it difficult to imagine surviving all of the fatigue… at that point I forever received the mark of a “slave,” like the branding of the red-hot iron the Romans put on the foreheads of their most despised slaves. Since then I have always regarded myself as a slave. It was then that the conviction was suddenly borne in me that Christianity is preeminently the religion of slaves. In 1937 I had two marvelous days at Assisi — there in the little Romanesque chapel of Santa Maria
where Saint Francis often used to pray, something stronger than I was, compelled me for the first time in my life to go down on my knees. Then in 1938 I spent ten days at Solesmes, from Palm Sunday to Easter Tuesday, following all the liturgical services. Though I was suffering from extreme headaches, by an extreme effort of concentration I was able to rise above this wretched flesh, to leave it to suffer by itself, and to find a pure and perfect joy in the unimaginalbe beauty of the chanting and the words. This experience enabled me to get a better understanding of the possibility of loving divine love in the midst of affliction. In the course of these services the thought of the Passion of Christ entered into my being once and for all. It was during the recitation of a poem that a young English Catholic shared with me that Christ Himself came down and took possession of me. [From that point on Weil had a permanent, conscious awareness of the presence of God in her life]. In my arguments about the insolvability of the problem of God I had never foreseen the possibility of a real contact between a human being and God.

I never wondered whether Jesus was or was not the Incarnation of God; but in fact I was incapable of thinking of Him without thinking of Him as God. It wasn’t until September, 1940, that I had finally prayed to God [in my own words]. I went through the “**Lord’s Prayer**” word for word using the Greek text (she refers to it as the “**Our Father**”) — the sweetness of it took hold of me so that for several days I could not stop myself from saying it over all the time. The following week I recited it every day before work, and repeated it very often while working in the vineyard. Since that time I have made a practice of saying it through once each morning with absolute attention; although I experience it every day, each time it exceeds my expectation. At times the very first words tear my thoughts from my body and transport it to a place outside space where there is neither perspective nor point of view. Sometimes during this recitation, or at other moments, Christ is present with me in person, but His presence is infinitely more real, more moving, more clear than on that first occasion when He took possession of me. As to the spiritual direction of my soul, I think that God Himself has taken it in hand from the start and still looks after it. That does not prevent me from owing you (Father Perrin) the greatest debt of gratitude that I could ever have incurred toward any human being. The greatest blessing you have brought me is of another order — in gaining my friendship by your charity, you have provided me with a source of the most compelling and pure inspiration that is to be found among human things. For nothing among human things has such power to keep our gaze fixed ever more intensely upon God, than friendship for the friends of God (true fellowship).

Our obligation [as believers] is to show the public the possibility of a truly incarnated Christianity. In all the history now known there has never been a period in which souls have been in such peril as they are today. The bronze serpent must be lifted up again so that whoever raises his eyes to it may be saved. Christ Himself is “**Truth itself**.” The function of the Church as the collective keeper of dogma is indispensable. The image of the Mystical Body of Christ is very attractive… it consists in this, that in the state of perfection, which is the vocation of each one of us, we no longer live in ourselves, but Christ lives in us (cf. Gal 2:20); so that through our perfection Christ, in His integrity and in His indivisible unity, becomes in a sense each one of us. All men bear an animal nature… they only escape from it in proportion to the place held in their souls by the authentically supernatural.
The Matter of Affliction

In the realm of suffering, affliction is quite a different thing from simply suffering. Affliction takes possession of the soul and marks it through and through with the mark of slavery. Pain that is only physical is a very unimportant matter and leaves no trace in the soul… on the other hand, affliction is an uprooting of life, a more or less attenuated equivalent of death. There is not real affliction unless the event that has seized and uprooted a life attacks it in all its parts — social, psychological, and physical. The great enigma of human life is affliction; at the very best, he who is branded by affliction will keep only half his soul. *Those who have been struck with divine affliction have no words to express what is happening to them.* Affliction is something specific and impossible to describe in any other terms. Affliction constrained Christ to implore that He might be spared, to seek consolation from man, to believe He was forsaken by the Father. Affliction makes God appear to be absent for a time, more absent than light in the utter darkness of a cell. A kind of horror submerges the whole soul. Affliction hardens and discourages us because it stamps the soul to its very depths with the scorn, the disgust, and even the self-hatred and sense of guilt and defilement that crime [alone] should produce. When one suffers from affliction, all the scorn, revulsion, and hatred are turned inward. Extreme affliction is a nail whose point pierces the very center of the soul… it is a marvel of divine technique. It penetrates to the center of the soul and there colors the whole universe with its poisoned light. Christ was made a curse for us; it was not only His body hanging on the wood that was accursed, it was His whole soul as well. In the same way, every innocent being in his affliction feels himself accursed. Another effect of affliction is, little by little, to make the soul its accomplice, it injects a poison of inertia into it… it is as though affliction has established itself in the soul like a parasite, and was directing it to suite his own purposes. *Only God can set him free from it.* Men struck down by affliction are at the foot of the Cross. Though God can never be perfectly present to us here below on account of our flesh… He can be almost perfectly absent from us in extreme affliction.

The Implicit Love of God

The implicit love of God can have only three immediate objects — the only three things here below in which God is really though secretly present are religious ceremonies, the beauty of the world, and our neighbor. With regard to the love of our neighbor, Christ made this clear when He said, “*I was hungry and you gave me something to eat*” (Mt 25:35). The Gospel is concerned with Christ’s presence in the sufferer, and makes no distinction between the love of our neighbor and justice. Our notion of justice dispenses with the inherent obligation of giving — when we give (and do a good work) we think we have a right to be pleased with ourselves. In the recesses of our mind we argue, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” “Am I responsible for my brother?” (cf. Gen 4:9; Mic 6:8; Mt 23:23; Lk 10:25-37). We rebel against such thinking because of our inherent sinfulness. On God’s part, creation is not an act of self-expansion, but of restraint. God accepted this diminution… He emptied a part of His being from Himself. God permitted the existence of things distinct from Himself and worth infinitely less than Himself. By this creative act He denied Himself… as Christ has told us to unselfishly deny ourselves. God denied Himself for our sakes in order to give us the possibility of denying ourselves for Him.
Generosity and compassion are inseparable, and both have their model in God; that is to say, in creation and in the Passion. Christ taught us that in the supernatural love of our neighbor is the exchange of compassion and gratitude between two beings, one possessing and the other deprived. It is not surprising that a man who has bread should give a piece to someone who is starving. Almsgiving when it is not supernatural, however, is like a sort of purchase—it buys the sufferer. In denying oneself, one becomes capable under God of establishing someone else by a creative affirmation... when one gives oneself in ransom for the other; it is a redemptive act. The Samaritan who stops and looks, gives his attention to the one who is suffering... the actions which follow proves that it was real attention (Lk 10:30-37). The love of our neighbor is the love which comes down from God to man. God is longing to come down to those in affliction... as soon as a soul is disposed to consent, God will precipitate Himself into it... only as time passes does the soul become aware that He is there. In true love, it is not we who love the afflicted in God; it is God in us who loves them (cf. Gal 2:20). Compassion and gratitude come down from God, and when they are exchanged in a glance, God is present. It comes about only through the agency of God. He who gives bread to the famished sufferer for the love of God will not be thanked by Christ (he has already had his reward in this thought itself)... Christ thanks those who do not know to whom they are giving food. As regards the supernatural purpose of affliction, compassion and gratitude are not only rare but have become almost unintelligible for almost everyone today. Not only have their very ideas almost disappeared, the very meaning of the words has been debased.

The love of the order and beauty of the world is the complement of the love of our neighbor. By loving our neighbor we imitate the divine love which created us and all our fellows... by loving the order of the world we imitate the divine love which created this universe of which we are a part. As human beings, we live in a world of unreality and dreams. To give up our imaginary position as the center, to renounce it, not only intellectually but in the imaginative part of our soul, means to awaken to what is real and eternal, to see the true light and hear the true silence. A transformation then takes place at the very roots of our sensibility... it is a transformation analogous to that which takes place in the dusk of evening of a road, where we suddenly recognize a rustling of leaves what we thought at first was whispering voices... we see the same colors and hear the same sounds, but not in the same way. To empty ourselves of our false divinity, to deny ourselves, to give up being the center of the world in imagination, and to discern that the true center of the world is outside the world... such consent is love. In ancient times the love of the beauty of the world had a very important place in men’s thoughts and surrounded the whole of life with marvelous poetry. Certain parts of the Old Testament (the Psalms, the Book of Job, Isaiah, and the Book of Wisdom) contain an incomparable expression of the beauty of the world. Likewise, Saint Francis shows how great a place the beauty of the world can have in Christian thought. Saint John of the Cross also has some beautiful lines about the beauty of the world. But in general, we might say that the beauty of the world is almost absent from the Christian tradition. This is strange. It is difficult to understand. It leaves a terrible gap. Christ tells us to contemplate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air... another time He invites us to contemplate the indiscriminate distribution of rain and sunlight. When I read Weil’s comments, I was reminded of the hymn, “For the Beauty of the Earth” (cf. Ps 107:8).

Interesting as it may seem, says Weil, at the present time the beauty of the world is almost the only way by which the Western world will allow God to penetrate their hearts and minds. The
soul’s natural inclination to love beauty is the trap God most frequently uses in order to win it and open it to the breath from on high. It is the perfect beauty of God that gives a transcendent character to the beauty of the world (cf. Gen 1:31) — the part of this beauty we behold and experience is designed and destined for our human sensibility. In short, the beauty of the world is Christ’s tender smile for us coming through matter… human beings are drawn to that which is beautiful without knowing what to even ask of it; we should like to feed upon it but it is merely something to look at. Art is an attempt to transport into a limited quantity of matter, an image of the infinite beauty of the entire universe. Works of art that are neither pure and true reflections of the beauty of the world are not strictly speaking beautiful. Every true artist has had real contact with the beauty of the world. Science has as its object the study and the theoretical reconstruction of the order of the world… the object with which science deals is the presence of Wisdom in the universe; Wisdom expressed through matter which constitutes the world. The contemplations of the order of the world constitutes a certain contact with the beauty of the world. Carnal love in all its forms has the beauty of the world as its object. Men want to turn this same love toward a being who is like themselves and capable of answering to their love. When the feeling for beauty happens to be associated with the sight of some human being, the transference of love is made possible, at least in an illusory manner. But it is universal beauty for which we yearn. The longing to love the beauty of the world in another human being is essentially the longing for the Incarnation. All the different kinds of vice constitute the search for a state where the beauty of the world will be tangible. The soul seeks nothing so much as contact with the beauty of the world, or at a still higher level, the beauty of God… yet at the same time it flies from it. When the soul flies from something it is always trying to get away from having contact with what is truly pure; this is because all mediocrity flies from the light.

The Essence of Friendship

There is a personal and human love which is pure and which enshrines an intimation and a reflection of divine love. This is “friendship,” provided we keep strictly to the true meaning of the word. There is no contradiction between seeking our own good in a human being and wishing for his good to be increased. When the motive that draws us toward anybody is simply some advantage for ourselves, the conditions of friendship are not fulfilled. Friendship is a supernatural harmony, a union of opposites. When a human being is in any degree necessary to us, we cannot desire his good unless we cease to desire our own. Where there is necessity there is constraint and domination. We are in the power of that of which we stand in need, unless we possess it. “Friendship is an equality made of harmony,” said the Pythagoreans. Where there is harmony there is a supernatural union between two opposites, that is to say, necessity and liberty, the two opposites God combined when He created the world and men. There is equality because each wishes to preserve the faculty of free consent both in himself and in the other. There is no friendship where there is inequality. A certain reciprocity is essential in friendship. If on one of the two sides there is not any respect for the autonomy of the other, he who consents to be enslaved cannot gain friendship.

A friendship is tarnished as soon as “necessity” triumphs over the desire to preserve the faculty of free consent on body sides. In all human things, necessity is the principle of impurity. All friendship is impure if even a trace of the wish to please or the contrary desire to dominate is found in it. In a perfect friendship these two desires are completely absent.
have fully consented to be two and not one; they respect the distance which the fact of being two distinct creatures places between them. Man has the right to desire direct union with God alone. Practically every human being is joined to others by bonds of affection that have in them some degree of necessity; as such, he cannot go toward perfection except by transforming this affection into friendship. There is not friendship where distance is not kept and respected. When the bonds of affection and necessity between human beings are not supernaturally transformed into friendship, not only is the affection of an impure and low order, but it is also combined with hatred and repulsion. This should be easy to understand — we hate what we are dependent upon, and we become disgusted with what depends on us. Sometimes affection does not only become mixed with hatred and revulsion; it is entirely changed into it. When Christ said to His disciples, “Love one another,” it was not attachment He was laying down as their rule. Because there were bonds between them due to the thoughts, the life, and the habits they shared, He commanded them to transform these bonds into friendship, so that they should not be allowed to turn into impure attachment or hatred. “Pure friendship” is an image of the original and perfect friendship that belongs to the Trinity and is the very essence of God. It is impossible for two human beings to be one while scrupulously respecting the distance that separates them, unless God is present in each of them.

To think that compassion, gratitude, love of the beauty of the world, love of religious practices, and friendship… that love in any of these forms can exist anywhere where Christ is absent is to belittle Him so grievously that it amounts to an outrage. It is impious and almost sacrilegious. These kinds of love are supernatural. So long as the soul has not had direct contact with the very person of God, they cannot be supported by any knowledge based either on experience or reason. These indirect loves constitute an upward movement of the soul, a turning of the eyes toward higher things. After God has come in person, not only to visit the soul as He does for a long time beforehand, but to possess it and to transport its center near to His very heart, it is otherwise. Love in all these forms is a movement of God Himself. These indirect loves are only the attitude toward beings and things here below of the soul turned toward the Good; they themselves have not any particular good as an object. Thus strictly speaking we are no longer concerned with forms of love, but with attitudes inspired by love.

We all know that there is “no true good” here below, that everything that appears to be good in this world is finite, limited, wears out, and once worn out, leaves necessity exposed in all its nakedness. Every human being has probably had some lucid moments in his life when he has definitely acknowledged to himself that there is “no final good” here below. But as soon as he sees this truth he covers it up with lies. Men feel that there is a mortal danger in facing this truth squarely for any length of time. After a time it kills everything within us that constitutes our ego. In order to bear it we have to “love truth more than life itself.” Those who do this turn away from the fleeting things of time with all their souls. God Himself sets their faces in the right direction. He does not, however, show Himself to them for a long time. It is for them to listen ceaselessly, and wait, not knowing for what. If after a long period of waiting God allows them to have an indistinct intuition of His light or even reveals Himself in person, it is only for an instant. Once more they have to remain still, attentive, inactive, calling out only when their desire cannot be contained. It does not rest with the soul to believe in the reality of God if God does not reveal this reality. The state of “nonbelief” is what Saint John of the Cross calls a “night” — the belief is simply abstract and does not penetrate the soul. He whose soul has seen, heard, and touched for itself, he will recognize God as the reality inspiring all indirect loves. God is pure beauty.
This is incomprehensible, because beauty by its very essence has to do with the senses. Beauty is always a miracle... but the miracle is raised to the second degree when the soul receives an impression of beauty which is no abstraction, but is as real and direct as the impression caused by a song the moment it reaches our ears. Our neighbor, our friends, our religious ceremonies, and the beauty of the world do not fall to the level of unrealities after the soul has had direct contact with God... on the contrary, it is only then that these things become real. Previously they were simply half dreams that had no reality.

Weil repeatedly denigrated herself because of the pervasive sinfulness in her own soul (flesh); such is a part of all humanity. Let me share a personal word on having a right perspective in life. All of us desperately want to “feel good about ourselves,” but that is not possible... instead we are to “feel good about God” and His eternal love for us (cf. Jer 31:3; Ps 25:6; 103:17; Jn 3:16; Rom 8:35-39; 1 Jn 3:1; 4:10, 18) — which by comparison differs infinitesimally. When we make “ourselves” our primary focus in life, we will despair of life and become seriously disappointed with ourselves, because we simply do not measure up to the standard of excellence that is necessary to cause us to rejoice in our own goodness. When “our performance” becomes the main focus of our lives, despair is inevitable. Our focus in life must be on “Christ,” not ourselves (cf. Heb 12:2). It is difficult for us as believers (because of the presence of indwelling sin) to remember that life is not about us; it is about God! (cf. Gal 2:20; Phil 1:21). Furthermore, we all want too “feel good about our own little world,” so we diligently do everything we can to make it a little utopia... but it never satisfies us; it only leaves us feeling empty and unfulfilled. Remember, that is precisely the way the world lives. Satan and our flesh will do everything they can to get us to focus on ourselves, our performance, and our own little world, and when they succeed it causes a level of depression in our soul (and rightfully so). It is also important to recognize that all of us as believers want to genuinely be “truly good” in the very core of our being... but as stated above, it is simply not in us to be good (cf. Rom 7:18). Since God alone is good (cf. Lk 18:19), essentially our desire is to possess the very purity and goodness of “God Himself” — again, that is beyond us. As incredible as it may seem, however, it is this “perfect reality” that awaits us in the life hereafter. The apostle John says, when we make our entrance into heaven we shall be “like Him” (emphatic!), and see Him just as He is (cf. 1 Jn 3: 2; Jn 17:24; Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; 2 Pet 1:4); that is, we shall be “perfect!”

Keeping all of the foregoing in mind, the secret to living life in this diabolical, sinful world, is to accept our unredeemed humanness in all its fullness (i.e., live in the light of true reality; it is what it is), strive to keep our eyes on Christ and walk with Him in every moment of life (cultivate intimacy with Him), and continually put to death the deeds of the body. Dearly beloved, we don’t set the ground rules for living — God does! — and that is our calling (cf. Mt 16:24; Rom 8:13; Gal 5:16; Eph 4:17, 24; Phil 3:12; Col 2:6; 3:1-5; 1 Th 4:3-5; 1 Tim 6:12). It is also important to remember that it is through affliction whereby we connect with God at an intimate level... and whereby He grows our faith... and whereby He transforms us into the image of His Son (cf. 1 Pet 1:6; 2:21; 4:1, 12; 5:10; 2 Pet 3:18; Rom 5:3-5; 8:28-32; 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Jam 1:2-4). Without affliction the self-centered desires of the flesh dominate. If the presence of indwelling sin in your life (inherent sin) is a monumental hurdle for you (as it is for every believer), read my study titled “The Game Changer!” You can find it on my website: www.TheTransformedSoul.com Nobody said the Christian life was “a walk in the park;” it is anything but (cf. Mt 16:24); yet when it is lived right, it brings incredible peace and joy to the soul (cf. Gal 5:22). As a believer you need to make your relationship with Christ “the highest priority in your life” — not second, not third, the highest! For those of you who have made Him second or third in your life, this may seem to you to be “far more radical than God intended it to be,” and
that is precisely what Satan would have you believe (read Mt 16:24 again). Beloved, there are no short-cuts in the Christian life. None.

**Concerning the “Our Father”**

As mentioned earlier, it wasn’t until September, 1940, that Weil had finally prayed to God in her own words. She went through the “Our Father” (the Lord’s Prayer) word for word using the Greek text — the sweetness of it took hold of her and for several days she could not stop repeating it over and over again. She made a practice of saying it through once every morning with absolute attention. At times, Weil said, “the very first words would tear my thoughts from my body and transport it to a place outside space where there is neither perspective nor point of view. Sometimes during this recitation Christ is [actually] present with me in person.” Following are Weil’s insights on the “Our Father” —

**“Our Father which art in Heaven”** — He is our Father. There is nothing real in us which does not come from Him. We belong to Him… He loves us… we are His. He is our Father who is in heaven — we cannot take a single step toward Him… we can only turn our eyes toward Him. We do not have to search for Him… we only have to change the direction in which we are looking. It is for Him to search for us. We must be happy in the knowledge that He is infinitely beyond our reach… and we can be certain that the evil in us, even if it overwhelms our whole being, in no way sullies the divine purity, bliss, and perfection.

**“Hallowed be Thy Name”** — His name is His word… it is the Word of God. His name is the only means by which the human spirit can conceive something about a being that is absent. God is absent… He is in heaven. Man’s only possibility of gaining access to Him is through His name. His name not only shines in the beauty and order of the world, it shines in the interior light of the human soul. His name is holiness itself; there is no holiness outside of it. In asking for its hallowing we are asking for something that exists eternally… we can neither increase or diminish it. We cannot prevent ourselves from desiring… we are made of desire; but the desire that nails us down to what is imaginary, temporal, can become a lever to tear us from the imaginary into the real, to lift us right out of the prison of self.

**“Thy Kingdom Come”** — This concerns something to be achieved, something not yet here. The Kingdom of God means the complete filling of the entire soul of intelligent creatures with the Holy Spirit. We can only invite Him… so that our thought of Him is a longing cry. It is when one is extremely thirsty, that one no longer thinks of the act of drinking, but thinks of the actual water itself — the image of water is like a cry from our whole being.

**“Thy will be done”** — Everything that has happened, whatever it may be, is in accord with the will of the almighty Father. That is implied by the notion of almighty power (omnipotence). It is important to remember, the future also (whatever it may contain), once it has come about, will have come about in conformity with the will of God. We cannot in the slightest add to or take away from this conformity. So in this clause we are once again asking for that which is. Here, however, we are not concerned with an eternal reality, but with what happens in the order of time. Nevertheless, we are asking for the infallible and eternal conformity of everything in time with the will of God. After having, in our first petition, torn our desire away from time in order to fix it upon eternity… we return to this desire in order to apply it once more to time.
We have to desire that everything that has happened should have happened, and nothing else. We have to do so because God has permitted (or willed) it, and because the obedience of the course of events to God is in itself an absolute good.

"On earth as it is in heaven" — The association of our desire with the almighty will of God should be extended to “spiritual things.” Though our own spiritual ascents and falls have to do with the other world, they are also events that take place here below, in time. On that account they are details in the immense sea of events and are tossed about with the ocean in a way conforming to the will of God. We have to cast aside all other desires for the sake of our desire for eternal life.

The three foregoing petitions are related to the three Persons of the Trinity — the Son, the Spirit, and the Father... and also to the three divisions of time — the present, the future, and the past. The three petitions that follow have a more direct bearing on the three divisions of time, and take them in a different order — present, past, and future.

"Give us this day our daily bread"… that bread which is supernatural. Christ is our bread… He is always there at the door of our souls, wanting to enter in, though He does not force our consent. If we agree to His entry, He enters… if we cease to want Him, He is gone. Furthermore, we cannot bind our will today for tomorrow. The effective part of “*our will*” is not effort, it is consent… a “yes” pronounced in the present moment and for the present moment. It is consent to the union of Christ with the eternal part of our soul. Bread is a necessity for us… as we receive it we use it up in effort. If our energy is not daily renewed, we become feeble and incapable of movement. We should ask nothing with regard to circumstances unless it be that they may conform to the will of God. The “transcendent energy” that comes to us from heaven, flows into us as soon as we ask for it. When we ask for this food, we should know that God will give it to us. We ought not to be able to bear to go without it for a single day, for when our actions only depend on earthly energies, we are incapable of thinking and doing anything but evil (fleshly actions). Only the energy from on high is fruitbearing… and we cannot store it.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" — At the moment of saying these words we must have already remitted everything that is owed to us. This not only includes reparation for any wrongs we think we have suffered, but also gratitude for the good we think we have done, and it applies in a quite general way to all we expect from people and things. All these are the “rights” that we think the past has given us over the future. First, there is the right to a certain permanence — when we have enjoyed something for a long time, we tend to think that it is ours and that we are entitled to expect fate to let us go on enjoying it (it is here where we confuse stewardship with ownership — the truth is, we are steward of everything, we own nothing). Then there is the right to a compensation for every effort whatever its nature; be it work, suffering, or desire. Every time we put forth some effort and the equivalent of this effort does not come back to us in the form of some visible fruit, we experience a sense of emptiness which makes us think that we have been cheated. The effort of suffering from some offense causes us to expect the punishment or apologies of the offender… the effort of doing good makes us expect the gratitude of the person we have helped. Every time we give anything out we have an absolute need that at least the equivalents should come back to us; that we have a right to it. Our debtors
comprise all beings and all things — these are the claims we have to renounce. To have forgiven our debtors is to have renounced the whole of the past. It is to accept that the future should still be virgin and intact, free from the bonds our [fleshly] imagination desires to impose upon it. In renouncing at one stroke all the fruits of the past without exception, we can ask of God that our past sins may not bear their miserable fruits of evil and error. So long as we cling to the past, God Himself cannot stop this horrible fructification. We must no longer live with the expectation of cherished compensations. To remit debts means renouncing everything that goes to make up our ego, without any exception. Ultimately, it means being happy that things should be so. The words "Thy will be done" imply this acceptance… that is why we can say a few moments later, "We forgive our debtors." To ask God to forgive us our debts is to ask Him to wipe out the evil in us. Pardon is purification. It is important to remember, God forgives our debts partially in the same measure as we forgive our debtors.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" — The only temptation for man is to be abandoned to his own resources in the presence of evil. His nothingness is then proved experimentally. After having contemplated the name, the kingdom, and the will of God… and after receiving the supernatural bread and having been purified from evil, the soul is ready for that true humility which crowns all virtues. Humility consists of knowing that in this world the whole soul (be it our ego or the supernatural part where God Himself abides) is subject to time and to the vicissitudes of change. There must be absolute acceptance of the possibility that everything natural in us must be destroyed, that the supernatural part will grow in conformity to the will of God.

In summary, in the first three petitions the attention is fixed solely on God… in the last three, we turn our attention back to ourselves in order to compel ourselves to make these petitions a real and not an imaginary act. The "Our Father" contains all possible petitions. It is impossible to say it once through, giving the fullest possible attention to each word, without a change, infinitesimal perhaps but real, taking place in the soul.

"A science which does not bring us nearer to God is worthless."

Simone Weil