

**THE HIDDEN LIFE OF THE SOUL.
FROM THE FRENCH BY THE
AUTHOR OF "A DOMINICAN
ARTIST", "LIFE OF MADAME
LOUISE DE FRANCE", ETC. ETC.**

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JEAN NICOLAS GROU

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From the French

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A DOMINICAN ARTIST," "LIFE
OF MADAME LOUISE DE FRANCE," ETC. ETC.

Jean Nicolas Guise

"Our life is hid with Christ in God"

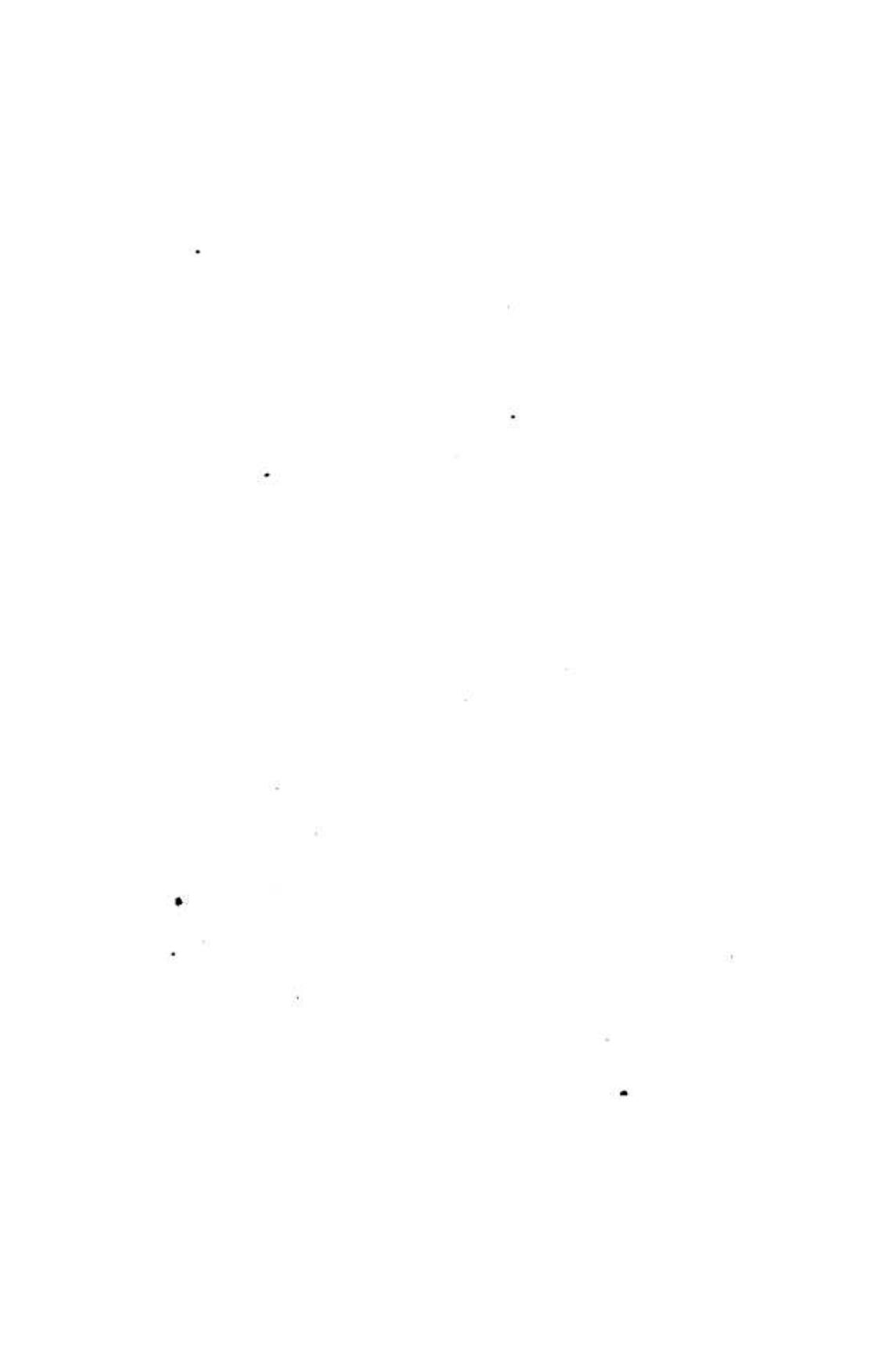


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Preface

THE author from whose writings the following chapters on the interior life are taken, was himself deeply and practically versed in the subject on which he wrote. While leading many souls along its blessed ways, his own life, so far as the world is concerned, was altogether "hid with Christ in God." Profoundly learned, not only as a theologian, but also as a classical student, the earnest devoutness of his mind (which was at once deep and broad) taught him to humble the power of a large and cultivated intellect before the Faith of Christ with the simplicity of a little child. Jean Nicolas Grou's writings are characterised by an absence of exaggeration which gives peculiar weight to his teaching. Love of God is the mainspring by which he would rule the whole Christian life; his motto

is ever "the Love of Christ constraineth us." Through the tender yet firm constraint of that love, he seeks to draw the soul to a perfectly simple surrender of self, which is to lead on to that life of which St. Paul said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is a life in which the soul "asks nothing and refuses nothing," desiring only in all things to fulfil God's holy Will. That the author's language should have led to the charge of Quietism is scarcely to be wondered at, in spite of his own assurance that he had no sympathy whatever with that enervating form of religious error. But those who will take the Père Grou as a spiritual guide, and study his teaching thoughtfully and prayerfully, will find themselves upon a track of earnest steadfast devotion, sober and unexciting rather than sensational or extraordinary, but certainly not "passive," in the sense of neglecting the call to "work out our own salvation," while subjecting every effort to God's holy Will and pleasure.

In these days, when excitement is perhaps the prevailing danger, not only of our material but of

our spiritual life, it has been thought that some souls may find rest and strength in the simple words of advice with which Père Grou supplied those who looked to him for guidance in the restless period which preceded the great Revolution.

It would be incorrect to say of a man who lived in such times that his years were uneventful; and yet Jean Nicolas Grou's life leaves us with an impression of calmness and tranquillity, in spite of its manifold troubles, ending as they did with exile and a lingering death in a foreign land. But throughout that life the questions, "What profit?" and "What matter?" were answered practically by "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

There is not much to tell of the outward incidents of Père Grou's life. He was born at Calais in 1731, and educated by the Jesuit Fathers. Study and devotion (under which head we must include the guidance of souls) filled up his life, whether in Paris, or in Lorraine—where the Duke Stanislas sheltered

him during a period of trial which preceded the outbreak of the great Revolution—or in Holland, or in England, whither, in the year 1792, he finally retired before the rapidly advancing waves of that terrible tempest. The Père Grou was the author of various works, classical as well as theological. One of the latter, " *Traité dogmatique de la vraie religion*," undertaken at the request of Monseigneur de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, and costing fourteen years of labour, was burnt at Paris some time later. On receiving the tidings, Père Grou's only remark was, "If the work could serve God, He would preserve it; but He will make use of some other more profitable servant than I am, to promote His glory."

In the year 1792, the Rev. Mr. Clinton, chaplain to Mr. Weld of Lulworth, invited him to seek a refuge in England; and for a time the exile shared Father Clinton's quarters, whence after a while he moved to the Castle, at Mr. Weld's earnest desire. A devoted friendship between the Weld family and Père Grou seems to have lasted during the

remaining years of his life ; but notwithstanding the good Father's affection for his hosts and their children, he continued to live in an almost perpetual retreat. Prayer and writing occupied all the time which was not claimed by his ministerial duties. He never began to write without praying that his work might be blessed, nor can we wonder that he believed himself to be guided by God to labour for His glory. "I write nothing of myself," he says ; "God directs my pen ; I often take it up not knowing what I am about to say, and sometimes I marvel at the thoughts suggested to me. If God gives me '*de quoi*,' I write freely ; if not, I wait His will." During his latter years he ceased to write, saying that "God did not give him *de quoi*."

This calm studious life lasted for ten years, during which the Père Grou was only once induced to leave Lulworth, and join a circle of congenial minds at Wardour Castle. But even this he felt to be a distraction, and the experiment was never repeated. In 1802 his health gave way to such