

grievous error to imagine, that if one be engaged in the world, he is outside the ways of God, as if God had condemned all states in the world, and that none of them could be embraced with a lawful and holy vocation. The world, by the operation and grace of the Holy Ghost, has produced perfect Christians in every state, and peopled heaven with a countless multitude of saints. But supposing all this, the proposition I have advanced, and which I resume is no less true; namely, that there are very few in the world who can have a reasonable and prudent certainty, that they are in that state of life to which God has called them. For, in order to have this assurance it is not enough, that I might have been called by God to any state in general. I require more. I should know in particular, and as far as I have the means of ascertaining, that God in his eternal predestination, has really marked out such or such a state for me, in preference to any other. This I can ascertain either by an express revelation from God, which the persons I speak of assuredly have not, or by the pains I shall take to the utmost of my power to discern the will of God in my regard. Now, it is evident, that people in the world generally take neither pains nor trouble for this purpose; they have therefore no reason to suppose, that their present state is that which God has allotted them in his adorable decrees. For to say that God, despite of their neglect, would guide them in so

dangerous a matter—that without their taking any trouble to learn his will, he should reveal it himself—that he would not in such a case leave them to their ignorance, and deliver them up to their blindness—this would be a presumption a thousand times condemned by the Word of God himself and by the sacred oracle of scripture. Thus they have no solid foundation for confidence, nay, I assert, on the contrary, they have more reason to fear the accomplishment of our Saviour's threats, who has so loudly and frequently assured us, that he will confound the false wisdom of the world, and abandon it to its own deceitful views and perverted understanding.

VI. You are at present anxious to know what you should do to discover the designs of heaven in your regard, and the nature of your vocation. This is what I am about to explain, and I will comprise in three points, which serve as so many rules, and which I beseech you to follow with entire fidelity. The first is, to have recourse to God; the second, to consult his ministers next; and the third, to consult yourself. Every thing that has any solid relation to the choice of your state of life, I mean, a good, wise, and Christian choice, will be found included in these three duties, which you will reduce to practice, as follows:

VII. As God immediately explains him to us only by interior inspirations, you should, in the bottom of your heart attend and listen to this secret . . .