**Excerpts from *The Cloud of Unknowing***

(James Walsh trans., New York : Paulist Press, 1981)

If you like, you can have this reaching out, wrapped up and enfolded in a single word. So as to have a better grasp of it, take just a little word, of one syllable rather than of two; for the shorter it is the better it is in agreement with this exercise of the spirit. Such a one is the word "God" or the word "love." Choose which one you prefer, or any other according to your liking--the word of one syllable that you like best.... With this word you are to beat upon this cloud and this darkness above you. With this word you are to strike down every kind of thought under the cloud of forgetting; so that if any thought should press upon you and ask you what you would have, answer it with no other word but with this one. [c.7]

...For though it is hard and constraining in the beginning, when you have no devotion, nevertheless afterwards, when you have devotion it shall become very restful and very easy for you, though it was so hard before. Then you shall have very little labour, or none at all. For then God will work sometimes all by himself; but not always nor even for a long time together, but when it pleases him and as it pleases him; then it will seem to you a joyful thing to leave him to get on with it. [c.26]

...The nature of this work is such that its presence gives the soul the capacity to possess it and to experience it; and no soul can have this capacity without that presence. The capacity for this exercise is inseparably united to the exercise itself. The two cannot be divided. So whoever experiences this divine work is able for it, otherwise not; insomuch that without this divine work a soul is as it were dead and cannot covet it or desire it. For as long as you have a will for it and a desire for it, insomuch you possess it, neither more nor less. Yet it is not a will nor a desire, but something which you are at a loss to describe, which moves you to desire you know not what. You must not care if you understand no more of it; just press on with the exercise more and more, so that you are always engaged in it.

To put it more clearly, let it do with you and lead you as it will. Let it be the one that works; you simply must consent to it. Simply look at it, and just let it be. Do not interfere with it, as though you wished to help it on, lest you spill it all. Try to be the wood and let it be the carpenter; the house, and let it be the husbandman dwelling in the house. During this time be blind, and cut away all desire of knowing; for this will hinder you more than it will help you. It is enough for you that you feel moved in love by something, though you do not know what it is; so that in this affection you have no thought of anything in particular under God, and that your reaching out is simply directed to God. [c.34]

Why does this little prayer of one syllable pierce the heavens? Surely because it is offered with a full spirit, in the height and the depth, in the length and the breadth of the spirit of him who prays. In the height: that is with the full might of the spirit; in the depth: for in this little syllable all the faculties of the spirit are contained; in the length: because if it could always be experienced as it is in that moment, it would cry as it does then; in the breadth: because it desires for all others all that it desires for itself.... [c. 38]

In all your other activities you are to have discretion... But in this exercise there is no question of moderation; I would prefer that you should never leave off as long as you live.... [Y]ou should always be either doing it or preparing for it; that is to say either actually or in intention. [c.41]

...This is one of the clearest and simplest signs that a soul can have to know whether he is called to undertake this exercise or not: if he fells, after... a delay and a long absence of this experience, when it comes suddenly, as it does, achieved without any intermediary, that he has a greater fervour of desire and a greater longing to get on with this exercise than he ever had before; so much so that often, I believe, he has more joy in the finding of it than ever he had sorrow in the losing of it. If it is thus, then it is truly a most authentic token that he is called by God to undertake this exercise, whatever his state is or has been.

Because it is not what you are nor what you have been that God looks at with his merciful eyes, but what you desire to be.... [c.75]

http://people.bu.edu/dklepper/RN413/cloud.html