The SPIRITUAL *Combat*

Lorenzo Scupoli

Resurrection Publishing

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Member Edition sample · Resurrection Publishing

This free excerpt includes the Note on the Text and one chapter. It is not the full book.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

Primary witness

The text of this Member Edition follows a single copy-text: the 1875 Rivingtons English of Lorenzo Scupoli's *The Spiritual Combat* ("A New Translation"; London, Oxford, and Cambridge), Chapters I–LXVI only. The English translator is anonymous on the title page.

Scope

This edition prints Chapters I–LXVI of the Combat proper.

The volume is the **Catholic** voice in Resurrection Publishing's Theme "Dealing with sin," alongside John Owen's *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*, Isaac of Nineveh's curated *Ascetical Homilies*, and John Cassian's *The Institutes of the Coenobia*.

Spelling and punctuation

Spelling and punctuation are lightly modernized for contemporary readers (American orthography). Punctuation is modernized only for readability—quotation marks, dashes, and possessive apostrophes—without breaking Scupoli's counsel into new claims. The serial (Oxford) comma is used throughout.

Retained vocabulary and forms

Theological and ascetical vocabulary is retained: *mortification* and *mortify*, *perfection* in Scupoli's sense of Christian perfection, *passions*, *distrust of self* / *self-distrust*, *sensual* / *sensuality*, and sacramental terms (*communion*, *Holy Sacrament*). The archaic second person

(*thee*, *thou*, *thy*, *thine*, *ye*) is preserved wherever the text addresses the reader directly.

Scripture references

Scripture references are normalized to a consistent citation form (for example *Rom. 8:13*), while preserving the edition's chosen texts, wording, and order of citation. Quotations are not silently replaced with any modern Bible version.

Structure

Rivingtons chapter divisions (I–LXVI) and each chapter's argument or title line are preserved. Arguments appear as paratextual extracts beneath chapter titles rather than as peer structural headings.

Version identification

This first publication is `scupoli-spiritual-combat-rp-2026.1`.

CHAPTER I

In what Christian Perfection consists; and that the attainment of it involves a struggle, and of four things necessary for this conflict.

IF you wish, beloved in Christ, to reach the height of perfection, and by drawing near to your God to become one spirit with Him, (and no aim can be imagined or expressed which is greater, or nobler than this,) you must before all else gain a true idea of what constitutes genuine spiritual perfection.

There are many who have believed it to consist exclusively in outward mortification, in hair-shirts and disciplines, in long watchings and fastings, and in other bodily sufferings and chastisements.

Others again, and especially women, think that they have reached the climax of perfection, when they say many prayers, attend many services and offices, and are regularly at Church and at Communion.

Some indeed, (and among this class not a few Religious persons who have withdrawn themselves from the world,) persuade themselves that perfection entirely depends on the regular attendance at the Hours of prayer, on silence, solitude, and exact observance of Rule.

And thus, some in these, and others in those external actions suppose perfection to consist. But they are all deceived. For although these practices are sometimes means of gaining the spirit of perfection, and sometimes are its fruits, yet in no sense can it ever be said that true spiritual perfection consists in these.

Unquestionably they are means most efficacious for obtaining spirituality, when they are properly and discreetly employed; for by them we gain strength against our own sinfulness and frailty, we are fortified against the assaults and snares of our common enemies, and,

in short, are provided with those spiritual helps, which are necessary to all the servants of God, and especially to those who have but lately entered His service.

They are also fruits of the Spirit in truly spiritual persons, who "keep under" the body because it has offended its Maker, and in order to keep it low and submissive to His commands; in those who live in solitude and silence in order to avoid even the least occasions of sin, and to have their conversation in Heaven, and who give themselves entirely to the Service of God and to works of mercy; who pray, and meditate upon the Life and Passion of Jesus Christ, not for the sake of curiosity and devotional feeling, but that they may gain deeper knowledge of their own corruptness and of God's Mercy and Goodness, and that they may be more and more inflamed with the love of God, and the hatred of themselves—following the Son of God by self-denial, and by taking the Cross upon their shoulders; who frequent the Holy Sacraments with the view of glorifying the Divine Majesty, that they may be more closely united with God, and gain fresh strength against their enemies.

To others, however, who found perfection entirely on external practices, such works may bring greater ruin than open sins; not that these works are bad in themselves, for in themselves they are very good, but in consequence of the mistaken use which is made of them they have this sad result; because those who practice them are so wrapped up in what they do, that they leave their hearts a prey to their own evil inclinations and to the devices of Satan. He sees them wandering from the right path, and not only does he leave them to the enjoyment of these exercises, but lets them vainly fancy that they are roaming amidst the delights of Paradise, and persuade themselves that they are borne upwards even to the angelic choirs, and that they feel the Presence of God within them. Such persons sometimes are so absorbed in curious, deep, delightful thoughts, that they become as it were oblivious of the world and of all creatures, and appear to themselves rapt even to the third heaven.

But in how great an error these persons have entangled themselves, and how far they are distant from that true perfection which we seek, may easily be gathered from their lives and conversation. For in everything, whether it be great or small, they seek their own advantage, and like to be preferred before others; they are self-willed and opinionated, blind to their own faults, sharp-sighted for the faults of others, and severely condemn the sayings and doings of other men.

But if you touch only with your finger a certain vain reputation in which they hold themselves, and are pleased to be held by others; if you bid them discontinue any of their regular and formal devotions, they are at once angry and exceedingly disturbed.

And if God Himself visits them with trials and infirmities, (which never come without His appointment or permission, and which are the tests of His servants' faithfulness,) or if He permits them to be sorely persecuted in order that they may gain a true knowledge of themselves, and be brought back to the way of true perfection, immediately the false foundation is discovered, and the miserable condition of the proud heart is seen. For in all events, whether adverse or prosperous, they are unwilling to be resigned and to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, acquiescing in His just though hidden judgments; neither will they, in imitation of the most lowly and patient Son of God, abase themselves below all creatures, and love their persecutors and enemies as dear friends, because they are the instruments of Divine Goodness, and work together for their mortification, perfection and salvation.

It is therefore quite evident, that all such persons are in great danger. For since the inward eye is darkened, by which they see themselves and their outward actions which are good, they attribute to themselves a high degree of perfection, and so, becoming more and more puffed up, they readily pass judgment upon others; yet they themselves need a special miracle of grace to convert them, for nothing short of that would have effect. It is more easy to convert and

bring back an open sinner to the path of truth, than the man whose sin is hidden and mantled with the semblance of virtue.

You clearly and distinctly see, then, from what I have said, that the essence of the spiritual life does not lie in any of those things to which I have alluded. It consists in nothing else but the knowledge of the Divine Goodness and Greatness, of our own nothingness, and proneness to all evil; in the love of God and the hatred of self; in entire subjection not only to God Himself, but for the love of Him, to all creatures; in giving up our own will, and in completely resigning ourselves to the Divine Pleasure; moreover, in willing and doing all this with no other wish or aim than the glory and honor of God, the fulfilment of His Will because it is His Will, and because He deserves to be served and loved.

This is the law of love engraven on the hearts of His faithful servants by the hand of the Lord Himself.

This is the self-denial which is required of us.

This is His sweet yoke and light burden.

This is that obedience to which our Redeemer and Master calls us, both by word and example.

But if you aspire to such a pitch of perfection, you must daily do violence to yourself, by courageously attacking and destroying all your evil desires and affections. In great matters as well as in small, it is necessary, then, that you prepare yourself and hold yourself in readiness for this conflict, for he only will be crowned who was brave in the battle.

Doubtless this is the hardest of all struggles, because by fighting against ourselves, we are, at the same time, attacked by ourselves, and on that account the victory obtained in such a conflict will be of all others the most glorious and most dear to God.

Therefore, if you used every endeavor to mortify yourself, and to tread down your inordinate affections, inclinations, and rebellious passions, even in the smallest matters, you would be rendering to God a far greater and more acceptable service, than if while permitting

some of your inclinations to remain unmortified, you scourged yourself until you bled, fasted more rigorously, and practiced an austerity greater than that of the hermits and saints of the desert, or converted souls by thousands.

For, although in itself the conversion of souls is dearer to God than the mortification of an irregular desire, yet it is not your duty to will and perform that which is in itself more excellent, but that which God before all else strictly desires and requires of you. For He doubtless seeks and desires of you self-conquest, and the thorough mortification of your passions, rather than that you, wilfully leaving one of them alive in you, should perform in some other direction some greater and more notable service for His sake.

Now you see wherein the real perfection of a Christian lies, and that to obtain it you must enter upon a constant and sharp warfare against self; you must provide yourself with four very safe and highly necessary weapons, that you may win the palm, and be finally a conqueror in this spiritual conflict—these are,

Distrust of self	I.
Trust in God	II.
Spiritual Exercises	III.
Prayer	IV.

Concerning all these, with God's help, we intend plainly and briefly to treat.

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