



Center for the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists
Paderborn University, Germany

Religious Knowledge in Marguerite Hessein, Mme de La Sablière (1640–1693)

John J. Conley
Loyola University of Maryland

In her *Christian Thoughts*, Marguerite Hessein, Madame de la Sablière explores the knowledge of God. Mature knowledge of God requires the noetic agent to go beyond the representations of God made by the imagination and the intellect. It is an apophatic (negative) knowledge, which grasps God's essence by grasping what God is *not*. The attainment of such knowledge requires a spiritual purification on the part of the religious seeker. The faculties of the memory, the intellect, and the will must be quieted by a severe detachment from the world and from a desire for the world. The mind must focus upon God alone. God must be grasped as radically other than the created world. Spiritually and morally, such a mystical knowledge requires the soul to live in a complete state of abandonment to the divine will. Authentic knowledge of God flows from such a noetic and moral absorption into God. In her rhetoric of spiritual abandonment and her apophatic quest to affirm God beyond concepts and images, La Sablière echoes many of the emphases of the then-current Quietist movement.

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Keywords:

abandonment, epistemology, intellect, memory, quietism, theology, via negativa, will