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A Discipleship of Equals: Towards a Christian Feminist Spirituality

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To
Reverend John M. Driscoll, O.S.A.,
who
has supported these endeavors
from
the very beginning,
with
my deepest gratitude

A Discipleship of Equals: Voices from Tradition—Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross

Constance FitzGerald, O.C.D.

INTRODUCTION

In the epilogue of *In Memory of Her*, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza suggests that in the past, women's relationship to God has been defined by their sexual relationship to men and through the patriarchal structures of family and Church. Now, a Christian feminist spirituality wants to probe and define women's relationship to God in their concrete experience of being called today beyond patriarchal structures into "a discipleship of equals."¹ What the great mystics like Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross teach us is that it is in the very development of their relationship with God that both women *and men* will first of all discover and then finally embrace their equality in life and discipleship. In the dark fire and the bright living flame of God's Spirit, equality is inescapably appropriated, even when this is not consciously recognized because of the pressures of culture and education. This means that the **experience** of equality and solidarity in a common humanity is conditioned by the depth of one's interiority or religious consciousness or relationship with God.

In the sixteenth century reform of the ancient Carmelite Order, the Spanish mystics, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, stand together through time and mirror in their lives and writings this experience of equality. Teresa, older by twenty-seven years, is the charismatic leader who envisioned, initiated and directed the reform of Carmel, first for the women and later for the men. John looked to her as the mother of the

Teresian Carmel, not only for her gifts of vision and leadership—she taught him practically the way to live in the new reform—but also because she embodied in her life and writings the deepest experiences of God the human person can know. In his own incomparable mystical works, he refers to her writings to enlarge on or complete his own.²

John, on the other hand, is the father. He went with Teresa to open the first house for men in the reform. His poems, the primary expression of his experience of God, are thought by many in our day to be the greatest poetry in the Spanish language. They have been the fire in the Teresian Carmel for four hundred years. John was the father of Teresa's soul, her confessor and confidant in prayer from at least 1572-1575, during which time she experienced the most profound depths of communion with God in the "spiritual marriage." In a letter to Mother Ann of Jesus, Teresa sings John's praises and urges Ann and her sisters in Beas to "talk to him with the utmost frankness, for I assure you," she says, "that you can talk to him as you would to me, and you . . . will find great satisfaction, for he is very spiritual and of great experience and learning. Those who were brought up on his teaching miss him greatly."³

An often told story illustrates the character and extent of the collaboration, communion, and equality of this great woman and man. On the feast of the Blessed Trinity, John was talking to Teresa about the profound mystery of the feast "when suddenly both of them were seized by the ardor of the Spirit and raised aloft" in ecstasy.⁴ In this context of a common experience of God's Spirit, it is significant that while Teresa's writings were published before John's and she was also canonized before he was, he, a man, was declared a Doctor of the Church almost fifty years before the structures of the patriarchal Church could bestow that same highest approval of her writings upon Teresa, a woman.

Now, in our time, we ask whether the writings and the lives of these two saints and doctors can contribute to a Christian feminist vision of a "discipleship of equals." Can they function for both the liberation and development of women and for the ultimate equality of women and men? What do these two giants of contemplation, these two friends and companions, tell us about the process of becoming equal?

To examine this question I want to do two things. First of all, I will try to trace the evolution of Teresa's image of Christ by analyzing the complex symbolism of her visions of Jesus. Secondly, I will look at Teresa's development in the light of specific teaching of John of the Cross. In this way, we will see Teresa's lifelong movement from confusion of heart, inferiority and fear

of abandonment to connectedness, mutuality and equality. If Christology has, indeed, been used to subordinate and exclude women, as Elizabeth Johnson suggests, I want to study Teresa's visions to see whether her experience of Jesus Christ validates that subordination and exclusion.⁵ It is my hope that the deepest meanings of her life, revealed in the imagery through which her psyche expressed its experience of God, will intersect with our questions and struggles and even redescribe our reality. The functioning of the image of Christ in Teresa's life really transformed her self-image, and an investigation of the development of her God-image may transform our self-understanding as well.

SYMBOLISM OF DESIRE AND THE IMAGE OF CHRIST IN JOHN OF THE CROSS

We can begin to study the process of becoming equal by concentrating on the symbolism of desire and friendship, or relationship, which is central in any interpretation of Teresa's and John's works. Teresa and John are always talking about desire—the desire of the human person first of all, but also the desire of God. God, says John, has only one desire for a person, and that is to exalt her and make her equal:

If anything pleases him, it is the exaltation of the soul. Since there is no way by which he can exalt her more than by making her equal to himself, he is pleased only with her love. For the property of love is to make the lover equal to the object loved. Since the soul in this state possesses perfect love, she is called the bride of the Son of God, *which signifies equality with him*. In this equality of friendship the possessions of both are held in common, as the Bridegroom himself said to his disciples: I have now called you my friends, because all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you . . . As a result they are truly gods by participation, equals and companions of God.⁶

The person, on her part, can never be satisfied, will never have what she desires, says John, until she has attained this equality of love, until God has "put her somehow in himself and made her his equal."⁷ The desire of God and the desire of the human heart coincide, therefore, although we often feel they are at odds with each other. It took Teresa many years to understand and to accept this reality and the equality it implied.

The itinerary of meaning we find in Teresa's experiences will be understood better if we look briefly at John of the Cross' teaching on the image of Christ. John counsels his readers to immerse themselves in the Jesus of the Gospels so that Christ will gradually become the focus of meaning in their lives. He

wants them, in this way, to build up more and more conscious references to Jesus Christ in order to redirect their deepest desire toward him. In this prayer process, an image of Jesus, unique for each person, slowly forms within and is the basis for any relationship with Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it is the basis for the experience of equality. All our life experience becomes a part of and is in dialogue with this image in some way or another. In the poem, *The Spiritual Canticle*, John sings:

O spring like crystal!
If only, on your silvered over face,
You would suddenly form
The eyes I have desired,
Which I bear sketched deep within my heart.

Commenting on this stanza, John says: the person "experiences within herself a certain sketch of love . . . and she desires the completion of the sketch of this image, the image of her Bridegroom, the Word, the Son of God, who . . . is the splendor of his glory and the image of His substance." When John, therefore, decries the destructive counsel of inexperienced spiritual directors, it is because they cause their directees to "lose the sublime image God was painting within [them]."⁸ In Teresa's visions of Christ we see a very explicit illustration of John's doctrine.

TERESA'S DEVELOPMENT A DIALOGUE: SELF IMAGE AND THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

Basic to any study of Teresa's visions is an understanding of the way of prayer she learned, during the solitude of a prolonged illness, from Francisco Osuna's *Third Spiritual Alphabet*, which was given to her by her uncle when she was a young, sick nun. "I tried as hard as I could," she writes, "to keep Jesus Christ, our God and our Lord, present within me, and that was my way of prayer. If I reflected upon some phase of the Passion, I represented him to myself interiorly." Even though this was difficult for her and she often resorted to good reading to collect her thoughts and quiet herself into God's presence, still she says beginners "must strive to consider the life of Christ" and use their own creativity and ingenuity to do this:

The soul can place itself in the presence of Christ and grow accustomed to being inflamed with love for his sacred humanity. It can keep him ever present and speak with him, asking for its needs and complaining of its labors, being glad with him in its enjoyments and not forgetting him because of them, trying to speak to him not through written prayers but with words that conform to its desires and needs . . . I consider the soul advanced

who strives to remain in this precious company and to profit very much from it, and who truly comes to love this Lord to whom we owe so much.⁹

According to Teresa's self-report, however, her life was a story of vacillating desire. At one time, the focus of her desire was a human love; at another time, the focus of her longing was Jesus Christ. She is quick to tell us when someone is her friend. She always mentions when someone loves her. Her life energy came from friendship. Yet, for many years she was certain that God and others—"the world"—were in competition for her affection.¹⁰ She found out very slowly, and not without mistakes, just **how** Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of her deepest desire.

Teresa felt that the almost reckless desire for God and eternity that characterized her youth was in adolescence dimmed and overshadowed by the desire for pleasure, vanity, romance, approval, and honor. In the company of her young friends and cousins, her desire for God grew cold.¹¹ Later, during her prolonged illness, after the fervor of her first years in religious life, Teresa's heart wavered again and rested in an intimate friendship with her confessor who was involved in a "sinful" relationship with a local woman.

We should note just how much Teresa appropriated without reflection the prevalent patriarchal attitudes toward woman as the temptress, the one who leads man into sin:

. . . Men [should] be on their guard with women who desire to carry on in this way. Men should believe that since these women have lost their shame before God (**FOR WOMEN ARE OBLIGED TO MODESTY MORE THAN MEN**), they can be trusted in nothing, for they will stop at nothing in order to hold on to this friendship and passion the devil has placed in them. (emphasis mine)

While the woman, herself, **may** have been the seducer, neither equality of responsibility nor the reality of men who seduce and then desert was part of Teresa's awareness when she wrote her *Life*. Furthermore, Teresa paints herself as one who also "seduces" the priest!

This confessor loved Teresa for her goodness, and she "loved him deeply." She used his affection for her to win him away from the woman, and though her intention was good and the priest was converted and "died a very good death," Teresa always felt guilty about the relationship. It was somehow competitive and diverted her desire from God, she thought. It placed her in danger of almost dying in mortal sin. "Damned be such loyalty [friendship] that goes against the law of God," she writes.¹² It should be noted that when Teresa saw herself as one

whose salvation was in jeopardy, she blamed it on the poor guidance of confessors who did not understand the significance and seriousness of misdirected desire.

Because of her divided heart, Teresa marveled she could endure suffering so patiently and associated it with the deep prayer experiences she was having. "All my conversations were with him [Jesus Christ] . . . the Lord [who] raised me from the dead," she writes.¹³ In the frightening experience of almost dying, Teresa felt her desire swing again toward Jesus Christ. But, THIS time of focused attention on God was not to last either.¹⁴

Here, Teresa brings two important symbols—*abandonment* and the *hand* of Jesus—into relationship with the image of Christ as one who not only relates in interpersonal *dialogue* but even *raises up* and makes whole. Because Teresa seemed to fear abandonment all through her life, she was very sensitive to the vacillation and treachery of her own heart. *She* abandoned the conversations of intimate prayer for human conversation and superficial pastimes, and, though Christ held out his hand to her, she did not want it. She felt unfit to face Christ because of her human friendships and was therefore "ashamed to return to the search for God by means of a friendship as special as is that found in the intimate exchange of prayer . . ." She writes:

It seemed impossible, my Lord, to abandon you so completely. And since I did forsake you so many times I cannot but fear. For when you withdrew a little from me, I fell to the ground. Although I abandoned you, you did not abandon me so completely as not to turn to raise me up by always holding out your hand to me.¹⁵

In response, as it were, to her self-understanding and world view, came Teresa's first *vision* of Jesus Christ.¹⁶ While she was actually with a friend, she "saw" a very severe looking Christ before her, making her understand his disapproval of such friendships. It is hardly mere coincidence that this vision reflected and validated Teresa's own fragile self-image. Nor is it inconsequential that at this time she described and found meaning in the appearance of a large ugly toad (a well-known symbol of evil) in the middle of the day, moving more quickly than usual toward her and her friend.¹⁷ There seems to be a profound relationship both here and in her other visions between Teresa's image of herself and her image of God. Each calls forth and responds to the other in some mysterious way, giving a much deeper meaning than we might suspect to the *dialogic* character of Teresian prayer, which Teresa, herself, describes

. . . as nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us.¹⁸

Teresa, however, continued her "worldly" conversations. She *needed* friendship, and she did not want to face the warnings she received. Her desire was focused elsewhere! It was only in the terrible wrenching caused by the sickness and death of her beloved and holy father, "who was everything to [her]," that she slowly and with good guidance began to pray regularly again. And, even though she never again abandoned prayer, neither did she forgo her frivolous pastimes for "almost twenty years." Thus, she was torn in two and found happiness in neither God nor her worldly enjoyments. *TERESA'S* God wanted everything! Her experience of Christ's severe judgment of her seemed only to validate this perception and widen the gulf between friendship with God and friendship with the world.¹⁹

What is the full import of these initial images of Christ? First of all, *hand* functions as an important symbol from the beginning of Teresa's prayer life all the way through to its fulfillment in the "spiritual marriage." Putting out one's hand is the first simple gesture of friendship, a movement of concern and reassurance. The hand can be a promise of tenderness and delicate care, even intimate union. But, there is a long way between the *touch* of a hand and that kind of communion. Moreover, the hand can be withdrawn along the way. A hand can be stretched out to touch in acceptance and encouragement or pulled back in rejection and condemnation, as the image of the severe, judging Christ indicates. From the other side, a stretched out hand can be refused because of the guilty confusion within one's own heart or out of the fear of being abandoned in the end.

When Christ holds out a hand not only to touch but also to *raise up* Teresa, the hand also signifies strength, power, authority, and even superiority. There is a certain inequality implied in the support, just as there is inequality implied in the severe judgment of Christ. This inequality is carried further in the symbol of being raised up *from death* which, while it does speak of potentiality and new life, seems to emphasize the disintegration, powerlessness, and brokenness of the one who is lifted up. In this powerlessness, we circle back to the symbol of abandonment which recurs throughout Teresa's life and is parallel to the symbol of death and resurrection. To feel abandoned or to fear abandonment is, according to J. E. Cirlot, "to feel forsaken by the 'god within us'; [it is] to lose sight of the eternal light in the human spirit." It points to Teresa's sense of estrangement from

her own deepest self, her own Center, and God as she imagines God to be. Abandonment as a recurring symbol indicates the need for deeper interiority.²⁰ Furthermore, it underlines Teresa's experience of a deadly evil within herself. "I wanted to live," she writes, "for I well understood that I was not living but was struggling with a shadow of death, but I had no one to give me life, and I was unable to catch hold of it. He who had the power to give it to me was right in not helping me, for so often had he brought me back to himself; and so often had I abandoned him."²¹

It was an image of the "wounded Christ," a statue, that finally stirred up resonances in Teresa's weary, broken, tired soul and called her, through the words of Augustine's *Confessions*, to "conversion." Only a human God, broken by human life, could have spoken into the life of this woman, wounded by years of conflicting priorities and vacillating desires. She identified with Jesus Christ and tried to picture him within her in the gospel scenes where he was more alone. It seemed to her that being alone and afflicted and in need, he had to accept her as she tried to companion him in the darkness of her own faith life.²² We see here the first faint seed of equality which will bear fruit in the difficult experience of the Dark Night.

For now, Teresa began to experience the *feeling* of God's presence, tenderness, and love, entering and pervading her life as she dwelt with increasing attention and care on the humanity of Jesus, particularly the poor, suffering Jesus. The pendulum of her desire swung once again, and she reached for satisfaction toward a God who was tender, who comforted, who gladdened, who satisfied, who gifted her. Now she placed herself in the "hands of God" and, while she desired to speak of nothing but Jesus Christ who was showing her such love, she was overcome with her ignorance and lack of education as a woman, her weakness and unworthiness as a person, and her general inability to measure up to the favors of her God. These very favors made her inferior not only to a strong and powerful God but even to men. In the context of trying to give an account of her gifts to her male advisors and confessors, she says: "... Just being a woman is enough to have my wings fall off—how much more being both a woman and wretched as well."²³

Her self-doubt, complicated, or perhaps caused by the marginal position of women in her society, battled with the inner affirmation she received. Even the experience of a God comforting as a mother, tender as a lover, could not reassure her in the face of the negative masculine evaluations of her life and prayer. Still, she persevered in prayer and really began to love "the most sacred humanity." In fact, she thought she was ready

to forfeit everything for Christ *until* her confessor was transferred to another place! Then, her "soul was left as though in a desert, very disconsolate and fearful." In the face of this abandonment, the old fear reasserted itself and in it one of Teresa's deepest life questions: Is abandonment the finality? Is there anyone for me who is ultimately trustworthy? The need for reassurance and friendship was overpowering. She was too fragile to give up her friendships, and, therefore, her new confessor advised her to commend the whole matter to God.²⁴

In response, the dialogue extended itself to **inner words**—effective words heard and understood—that changed the heart and could not ever be forgotten. Teresa, in her first rapture, heard deep within her being words *verifying her own suspicions* that her human friendships conflicted with her relationship with Jesus Christ: "No longer do I want you to converse with men but with angels."²⁵ Concerned chiefly with her conflict over the incompatibility of her relationships, Teresa did not understand at first the extent of the liberation offered her: No longer was she to be victim to human words of wisdom, controlled by human words of love and assurance, but she was to own her own life and be guided by her own inner voice. The challenge of the word was to find the focus of motivation, of wisdom, within her own heart, but Teresa made this transfer only with difficulty. However, in the light of this inner assurance, Teresa's motivation did shift again, and she made a decisive choice of the heart for Christ—Wisdom who speaks, changes, refreshes, quiets, makes strong. Out of this experience, Teresa articulated certain basic beliefs about human friendship, and later she developed these extensively in *The Way of Perfection*. Although she never seemed *consciously* to grasp the full import of the word, she expresses her freedom: "... I have never again been able to tie myself to any friendship or to find consolation or bear particular love for any other persons than those I understand love Him and strive to serve Him."²⁶

While the inner autonomy, freedom, and strength that Teresa experienced in herself grew, she discovered her appropriation of them was only partial when she was faced with the negative evaluations of her numerous locutions by learned and wise MEN. When they decided that her experience was clearly from the devil(!), Teresa was terrified, and "her fear made her forget her self-worth." As a WOMAN in sixteenth century Spain, she needed their reassurance and approval. In challenging the truth of Teresa's inner word and attempting to lead her away from her own interior wisdom, these "wise" MEN drove this WOMAN into deeper inferiority. It was they who quite unconsciously spoke the word of the "devil" whose "aim ... is [always]

regression or stagnation in what is . . . inferior. . .," according to Cirlot.²⁷ In the dichotomized world of patriarchal Spain, Teresa's inner experience was either from God or the devil (or her own deluded self). The devil here stands as such a strong archetypal symbol of societal domination, control and power-over. It surfaces in every age and exerts its demonic influence whenever a person, a group, or a nation appropriates power and structure to keep a race, a sex, a people, in an inferior, powerless, oppressed position.

Teresa's agitated feeling of being deluded, alone, and without any human support was answered by another word in the dialogue which effected peace, strength, courage, and security: "Do not fear, daughter, for I am, and I will not abandon you; do not fear." Teresa's whole person was touched by reassurance as the pathway back to her own Center opened up. She *began* to experience a sporadic, though often fearless, mastery over not only human condemnation but even her own inner contradictions:

O, my Lord, how you are my true friend . . . Oh, who will cry out for you, to tell everyone how faithful you are to Your friends! All things fail; you, Lord of all, never fail. O my God, who has the understanding, the learning and the **new words** with which to extol your works as my soul understands them? All fails me. . . , *but if you will not abandon me, I will not fail you.* Let all learned men rise up against me, let all created things persecute me, let the devils torment me [but] do not you fail me, Lord.²⁸

One can feel her remembering the intimidation she suffered when she writes a few years later to her nuns in *The Way of Perfection* that "since the world's judges are sons of Adam and all of them men, there is no virtue in women they do not suspect."²⁹

But, the Lord did not fail Teresa. When, in 1559, the Inquisitor General published an Index of Forbidden Books which prohibited the reading in the vernacular of many books on prayer she enjoyed, Teresa was very upset. The Lord said to her: "Don't be sad for I shall give you a living book." In retrospect, she understood this as a promise of the visions to come in which Jesus, eternal Wisdom, became the "true book" in which she saw all the truth she needed impressed upon her forever.³⁰

This whole period was a turning point for Teresa. In the experience of numerous words of Wisdom, Teresa, the woman, was being given to herself and empowered to claim her own inner wisdom. She was being lifted out of her inferiority and fear. She saw she was "another person" and "would have

disputed with the entire world that these words came from God." Later, she was even to pray in *The Way of Perfection* to possess "all human eloquence and wisdom together" in order to know the way to explain clearly the path to the knowledge of God.³¹

The fact remains that Teresa was so affirmed as a woman by this "Master of wisdom . . . Wisdom itself, without beginning, without end, without any limit to [her] works" that her view of herself changed, and she began to see women from the perspective of God. Her later writings stand as a clear and forceful defense of women's wisdom; so forceful, in fact, that the censors of her writings sometimes intervened, and Teresa was forced to revise her work.

Some years later, in an era still suspicious of interior prayer and wary of false mysticism, especially in women, Teresa wrote to her nuns with bold conviction in *The Way of Perfection*:

You will hear some persons frequently making objections: "there are dangers"; "so and so went astray by such means"; "this one was deceived"; "another who prayed a great deal fell away"; "it's harmful to virtue"; "it's not for women, for they will be susceptible to illusion"; "it's better to stick to their sewing"; "they don't need these delicacies"; "the Our Father and Hail Mary are enough." This last statement, Sisters, I agree with. And indeed they are sufficient.³²

Teresa, the woman, was no longer to be intimidated by the oppressive words and decisions of fearful men into dichotomizing deep, interior prayer and vocal prayers—the Our Father and the Hail Mary. Now, she trusted her own inner wisdom and did not hesitate to point accusingly at the senselessness of what was being urged upon women:

Well, what is this, Christians, that you say mental (interior) prayer isn't necessary? Do you understand yourselves? Indeed, I don't think you do, and so you desire that we all be misled. You don't know what mental prayer is, or how vocal prayer should be recited, or what contemplation is, for if you did you wouldn't on the one hand condemn what on the other hand you praise.³³

Realizing that the only real danger lay in the neglect of the interiority in which the God of wisdom would call them to own their own lives, Teresa urged her sisters not to pay any attention to the fears men raised or to the picture of the dangers they painted. She exclaimed with determination, with inner authority, and even a hint of sarcasm: "Hold fast, daughters, for they cannot take from you the Our Father and the Hail Mary." Kavanaugh explains:

Here the censor, quick to catch the point, intervened and, going a step further than his usual method of simply crossing out the passage, wrote in the margin; "It seems she is reprimanding the Inquisitors for prohibiting books on prayer."³⁴

Teresa's visions apparently began in earnest after the locution mentioned above. Although she was counselled to pray to be led along a different path, her own inner experience prevented her from sincerely wanting this "deliverance." Nevertheless, she was torn by the controversy and her own efforts to be obedient:

There were enough things to drive me insane . . . [and] I didn't know what to do other than raise my eyes to the Lord. For the opposition of good men to a little woman, wretched, weak, and fearful like myself, seems to be nothing when described in so few words . . . if the Lord hadn't favored me so much, I don't know what would have happened to me.³⁵

But, the lifelong dialogue did continue, and the Lord urged Teresa deeper into the inner Mystery in ways that defied her expectations. She felt Jesus Christ *beside her* even though she did not see him with her eyes nor even, she thought, with her imagination. Yet, she "saw" it was he who was "speaking" to her—a human person who shared life with her (accompanied her and witnessed her life) in a deep mutuality of understanding, friendship, and love. They were like two people who love each other very much and who, even without signs, with only a glance, understand each other perfectly. She writes:

The Lord puts what he wants the soul to know very deeply within it, and there he makes it known without image or explicit words . . . And this manner in which God gives the soul understanding of his desires, and great truths and mysteries is worthy of close attention.³⁶

What are the specifics of what Teresa here calls "vision"? Along with the "impressions of the Divinity" that Teresa felt earlier, in the prayer of quiet, it was now Jesus in his *humanity* who was present, who "spoke," who was, above all, known with an intuition "clearer than sunlight." This knowledge was engraved upon her mind, her understanding, with a clarity and permanence that could not be erased or doubted, that could not have been even *consciously* desired. It was, she explains, as if someone who had never even tried to learn to read suddenly possessed all knowledge. This woman who was so convinced of her own inadequacy and ignorance could say, "The soul sees in an instant that it is wise."

It is intriguing that in the intersubjective union that was slowly taking over Teresa's consciousness, it was the *human* Jesus, son of Mary, whom she "knew" and enjoyed. But, her experience was

subtle and profound. In her determination to forgo dependence on human approval and honor in identification with this man who suffered such contempt and rejection for her sake, she realized that the clear-sighted wisdom she discovered in herself was closely related to this Jesus who was not only man but also divine Wisdom. She says, "How rich will [she] find that [she] is, [she] who has left all riches for Christ . . . How wise will [she] be, [she] who rejoiced to be considered mad because that is what they called *Wisdom Himself!*"³⁷

When one looks at Teresa's experience of inner wisdom and self-affirmation, the growing ability we see in her writings to trust that experience and inner truth, and the strong conviction of feminine worth she later passes on to her sisters, we are reminded of the investigations of feminist theologians today regarding "Sophia." If the New Testament does indeed identify Jesus with Sophia and if we can speak, therefore, as Elizabeth Johnson suggests, of the union of female divine Wisdom (Sophia) and male humanity in Jesus, we can understand better the dynamics of Teresa's appropriation of her own feminine truth.³⁸ Divine Wisdom, who is Jesus, was, as it were, a mirror in which Teresa saw the reflection of herself as a wise WOMAN. Teresa, in a sense, became what she saw, for in Jesus, eternal Wisdom, the feminine was lifted up and cherished. In a society where "weak, ignorant" women lived on the margins of knowledge in subordination to the men who controlled them, Teresa's sexual identity was affirmed by God. Therefore, even though Church men continued to warn her of the danger of deception, she was reassured from within and conscious of being brought to new "frontiers."³⁹ Had the culture and theology of the sixteenth century fitted Teresa to articulate this, she might have echoed the words from *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*:

I found God in myself
And I loved Her
I loved Her fiercely.⁴⁰

While Teresa experiences and writes of Jesus as Wisdom, John is the one who clearly validates the identity and place of Wisdom in mystical union, particularly in *The Living Flame* and the latter part of *The Spiritual Canticle*. For him, Jesus Christ is uncreated Wisdom, and union with God is seen as transformation in Divine Wisdom. He says, ". . . [the] soul . . . will then be transformed into . . . Wisdom, the Son of God." And, at the end of the second book of the *Dark Night*, John explains that when the person is ready, "Divine Wisdom unites herself with the soul in a new bond of the possession of love."⁴¹

It is critical to note, however, that even though Teresa experienced growing inner certitude, the symbols which appear in her descriptions of her visions continue to point also toward connectedness, relationship and tenderness, suggesting that autonomy and intimacy are not mutually exclusive but, rather, integrally connected. She writes:

... The Lord desired to show me only *his hands* which were so very beautiful ... After a few days I saw also that *divine face* which it seems left me completely absorbed. Since afterward he granted me the favor of seeing him entirely, I couldn't understand why the Lord showed himself to me ... little by little until later I understood that his Majesty was leading me in accordance with my natural weakness.⁴²

Let us look at *hands*, masculine hands, held out to support and strengthen, perhaps even to convey power and authority. But, these are beautiful hands. They are somehow *for* Teresa. They promise deeper self-donation and, though they initially frighten because of their other-worldly "splendor," they invite trust. Teresa frequently mentions her surrender to or withdrawal from "the hands of God." Jesus' hands have a power over Teresa all the way through to the "spiritual marriage."

The image of "so beautiful a face" complements the hand image, but it is a different metaphor. It is one thing to hold a hand, to be held in another's hands, even to be caressed by hands. It is another experience to look into a beautiful, light filled face. I cannot recall without tears the words my mother wrote to me on my fiftieth birthday: "I will remember," she said, "the first time I looked into your beautiful little face," and I reflect on the meaning of a mother's face in a baby's life and development. Whether a child sees herself as beloved or blamed, worthwhile or inferior, is dependent on what she has seen in the face of her mother. Face has a primary association with mother.

In her work on Julian of Norwich, Elizabeth Koenig draws on an essay by D. W. Winnicott who argues that "the mother's face is the precursor of the mirror in its contribution to the sense of personal identity."⁴³ This essay intrigues me because, in one of the last visions Teresa describes in the *Life*, Jesus is a mirror filling her soul. Koenig tells us that when an infant looks at her mother, what the baby sees is not the mother but the baby herself. The mother is looking at the baby, but what she looks like [to the baby] is related to what she, herself, sees. If she is so pre-occupied with herself that she reflects only her own mood or, worse still, the rigidity of her own defenses, the baby may spend a lifetime trying to find someone who can give her to herself. If the mother's face is not a mirror in which the baby

may learn about herself, she will move through life attempting to be seen in a way that will make her feel she exists and is worthwhile.

When we reflect on Teresa's early descriptions of her own self-image, we sense she needed to receive something of herself from the face of another. This can throw new light on the significance for Teresa of the face of Jesus Christ which she says "gives the most intense delight to the sight" in its splendor and soft whiteness and beauty. It suggests that the Face functions as a maternal, feminine symbol, even when the face belongs to a friend, a lover, or a god. To look into a face that is *for us*, in whose beauty and total regard we see our own unsuspected beauty and potential, is expressive of a whole new level of self-understanding.

Here we see, as John of the Cross suggests, that God moves through human ways of knowing according to the mode of the soul, according to the way the human person is made. God does not violate our deepest needs, but fulfills slowly in our life situations our most profound desires for reassurance, unconditional love, tenderness, and special regard.⁴⁴ We see also that God, like a mother, is on the side, not of lifelong subordination and inferiority, but of development characterized by mutuality.

This was Teresa's learning as the experience of Jesus risen imprinted itself on her heart as a vibrant living image. Then she discovered that although she had sinned and was weak, she really was an image of God. When she compares the light of this vision to the sun and assures us the brightness of the sun appears very much tarnished beside the glorified Jesus, she could be describing the movement of her own self-understanding. "It's like the difference between a sparkling, clear water that flows over crystal and on which the sun is reflecting and a very cloudy, muddy water flowing along the ground." Teresa saw very clearly, as did those who knew her, that these experiences had radically changed her. Even her health improved!⁴⁵

What must be stressed here again is the all pervasive presence of the dialogue, or the dynamic of reciprocity, between Jesus and Teresa. Each responded to the other in a day by day companionship that stretched over the years and "changed" both Teresa and God. Jesus Christ accommodated his presence to Teresa's moods and the circumstances of her life. She tells us that, although it was the risen Jesus who accompanied her, when she was suffering and persecution, he appeared on the cross or in the garden, wounded or crowned with thorns. In fact, he took her part and guided her through the misunderstandings, suspicions

and poor counsel of her confessors who continued to believe she was deceived by the devil and should resist her visions.

When men continued to press her to repudiate her own inner experience, a challenge was thrown to Teresa (and perhaps to Jesus!). Would she repudiate the love experience, would she choose self-hatred over self-acceptance, would she accept the self being shown and given to her—a self connected, related, possessed—rather than the isolated self being forced upon her? We sense the struggle and more than a hint of humor when she tells us that Jesus seemed annoyed when she was forbidden to practice prayer. "He told me to tell them that now what they were doing was tyranny and He gave me signs for knowing that the vision was not from the devil." Furthermore, when she tried to obey the command to reject and resist her experiences, "there was a much greater increase in them." Jesus taught her what she should say and gave her so many adequate reasons that she felt "completely secure."⁴⁶

We get the full import of Teresa's internal conflict in Jesus' next move. He took in his own hands the cross Teresa was holding to drive him away. When he returned it to her, it was made of precious stones. After that, she always saw the cross this way, but no one saw it except her!! This is powerful symbolism to express not only the continual challenge to Teresa to accept her own inner truth, her whole humanity, but also the integration of many seemingly contradictory elements in her life: outer obedience with inner freedom and certitude; conflict and opposition with genuine maturation; personal autonomy and strength with fidelity and surrender in relationship; inner light with inner darkness. All this was the fruit of the experience of being in love with God. And, she was in love with God precisely because she, herself, was loved without restriction.

Teresa's life and desire, therefore, stood open to God's next move in the dialogue! She had reached another intersection. She tells us:

I saw close to me . . . an angel in bodily form . . . very beautiful, and his face was so aflame that he seemed to be one of those very sublime angels that appear to be all afire. I saw in his hands a large golden dart and at the end of the iron tip there appeared to be a little fire. It seemed to me this angel plunged the dart several times into my heart and that it reached deep within me. When he drew it out, I thought he was carrying off the deepest part of me; and he left me all on fire with great love of God.⁴⁷

In the beautiful fiery angel we see the antithesis of the devil who was, according to many, the cause of Teresa's visions of Christ. As a symbol of the world of God, the angel is, first of all,

another confirmation of Teresa's very self and a promise of eventual victory over the power of evil. The experience of an angel complements the visions of devils and hell, which we see in Teresa's *Life* at this time, and brings to consciousness Teresa's ongoing struggle to understand her own humanity even more deeply and to integrate into a wholesome self-image both the light and the darkness in her own heart. But, there is much more in this rich symbolism.⁴⁸

Standing as it did just before the beginning of her reform of the Carmelite Order, at a time of intense persecution and suffering, this vision signaled a *painful* breakthrough to a whole new level of life, motivation, and energy for Teresa. The awesome configuration of symbols—the fire, the arrow, the pierced heart, the wound—tell of a shattering intrusion and of a demand for total self-donation and availability. The heart, with all its great, conflicting desires, was torn open, pierced to its very depths, possessed by a compelling power capable of either destroying what it touched, or changing it into itself. Teresa, in a sense, became the fire; she did not surrender to destruction. Instead, her insatiable desire and passion absorbed the fire and were transformed into boundless spiritual energy. But, we must not miss the implication that this creativity was bought at a price: disintegration—change—for the sake of God.

Heart is one of the basic, primordial images of the self. To see it thrust itself into Teresa's consciousness with such intensity and power clearly manifests that a process of unusual spiritual maturation and fulfillment is going on in the depths of her soul. The psyche is moving toward its full expansion in a decisive moment of illumination. This means that while the *heart*, pierced and wounded with the *flaming arrow*, certainly indicates, in Teresa, an explicit awareness of an intersubjective union of love with God, the emotional identification with that God that we see here is possible only because of the unity and wholeness of the self that have slowly developed in the life long relationship with Jesus Christ.⁴⁹ Because her self-image had been purified, to some extent, of its sinful tendencies toward inferiority and excessive self-depreciation, Teresa could surrender to being loved and claimed by God. Stripped of concern for human respect, she could receive the creative energy of love that would issue in an alternative vision, new life and service in the sixteenth century Church.

John of the Cross clearly understood the relationship of this experience to Teresa's role as foundress and/or reformer. He writes explicitly about her in the *Living Flame of Love*:

The soul feels its ardor strengthen and increase and its love

become so refined in this ardor that seemingly there are seas of loving fire within it, reaching to the heights and depths of the earthly and heavenly spheres imbuing all with love. It seems to it that the entire universe is a sea of love in which it is engulfed, for, conscious of the living point or center of love within itself, it is unable to catch sight of the boundaries of this love . . . The soul is converted into the immense fire of love . . . Few persons have reached these heights. Some have, however; especially those whose virtue and spirit was to be diffused among their children. For God accords to founders, with respect to the first fruits of the spirit, wealth and value commensurate with the greater or lesser following they will have in their doctrine and spirituality.⁵⁰

If Teresa's text is read well, we see that the God of Teresa did not want a fearful, subservient woman. The expectations of the friendship were far too demanding for that. Only a strong woman, capable of capitalizing on her own inner experience to create imaginative life alternatives, could bear to hear the Lord's next "compelling" words in the dialogue which commanded her to strive to found a new monastery—no matter how others would judge the venture. We have to read chapters 32-34 of Teresa's *Life*, where she describes the reactions of her own community, her confessors, superiors, and even the people of Avila, to understand the dramatic and sometimes comical dialogue between Jesus and Teresa. Beneath it, we touch Teresa's profound life struggle between self-doubt and fear on the one hand and a whole new vision of reality on the other. Teresa was being urged to take the image of Christ that had slowly been etched into her inner being and to create in her own social milieu, far beyond the boundaries of her own soul, a likeness of that love-image.⁵¹ Because she was being pushed toward an autonomy stronger than her society allowed or would approve, she cried out:

My Lord, how is it that you command things that seem impossible? For if I were at least free, even though I am a woman! But bound on so many sides, without money or the means to raise it or to obtain the brief or anything, what can I do, Lord?⁵²

During this time, Teresa's obsession with self-doubt, with fear of deception, with a consciousness of her own sinfulness, was balanced by repeated moments of inner affirmation and assurance. While so many around her condemned her, belittled her and attempted to stop the new foundation, she vacillated between extreme anxiety and an amazing ability not to take the reprimands to heart. That she was growing steadily in self-esteem and trust in her own inner wisdom is evidenced by a plethora of images in her numerous visions and locutions. For instance, she experienced herself clothed in a robe of shining

brightness by our Lady and St. Joseph who promised to watch over her and who placed around her neck, as a sign, a beautiful golden necklace. Our Lady took Teresa *by the hands* and encouraged her to make the foundation of St. Joseph's. Moreover, she says, "I was given to understand that I was now cleansed from my sins." Later, she saw Christ who seemed to be receiving her with great love and who placed a crown on her head and thanked her for what she did for his Mother.

Teresa's God was forcing her to believe in herself in spite of a patriarchal culture which put little store in the wisdom, judgment or abilities of women. The Lord told her to proceed and not to listen to the various opinions because few would counsel her prudently! Furthermore, she was not to be distressed about making the foundation under the protection of the Bishop of Avila and, therefore, not giving obedience to the Order, for "the Lord had told me," she said, "it wasn't suitable to give it to my superiors! He gave me the reasons why it would in no way be fitting that I do so. But he told me I should petition Rome in a certain way . . . and that he would take care that we get our request. And so it came about . . ." ⁵³

Teresa's ability to envision and then pursue creative life alternatives was not based on an isolated, autonomous, go-it-alone ego. Rather, it was rooted in a deep connectedness and identification with "Another" to whom she was related in unconditional love. Hence, she could say with a hint of exasperation when everything seemed to be failing: "Lord this house is not mine; it was founded for you; now that there is no one to take care of its affairs, you . . . must do so." And earlier, when she was worried that the house and grounds she had were much too small for a monastery, she heard an irritated Lord say to her: "Oh covetousness of the human race, that you think you will be lacking even ground! How many times did I sleep in the open because I had no place else." ⁵⁴

The easy familiarity and affirmation of this constant companionship signaled a growing feeling of equality with others, even with the nobility. Teresa tells us that she conversed with them with the freedom she would have felt had she been their equal in social position. Even more significant, though, is the subtle experience of equality with Jesus Christ. She admits:

I began to talk to the Lord in a foolish way, which I often do without knowing what I am saying. It is love that is then speaking, and . . . the soul is so transported that *I don't know the difference there is between it and God.* ⁵⁵

In the context of this identification and equality, we finally see the resolution of Teresa's life-long conflict over human friend-

ship. When, after many years, she met again the Dominican Garcia de Toledo, they were drawn irresistibly to share their life experiences with each other. Since Teresa liked him so much, she longed for him to give himself totally to God and God's service, and so she prayed: "Lord, you must not deny me this favor. See how this individual is fit to be *OUR* friend." Then she adds, "O the goodness and great humanity of God!" But, then Teresa was overcome with great affliction and guilt lest she had seriously offended God. She was not yet consciously at peace with her human loves. The Lord, however, gave her a message for the priest through which he turned completely to God. Later, when Teresa was rejoicing over the graces given to the man and thanking God for *fulfilling her desires*, and making "a little old woman wiser . . . [than] a very learned man," she was overcome by rapture, and she tells us:

I saw Christ with awesome majesty and glory showing great happiness over what was taking place. Thus he told me and wanted me to see clearly that he is always present in conversations like these and how much he is pleased when persons so delight in speaking of him.⁵⁶

Here we see a reversal in Teresa's God. Before, she was to talk with angels, not human persons. Now, her God not only rejoiced in her human conversations and loves, but understood her love and concern and compassion for others as an extension of the love that was flooding her life. In fact, her God rushed to answer her prayers for others and to verify her relationships, even with those who had died.⁵⁷ Teresa's awareness had changed, and she no longer saw her human friendships as conflictual. It was as if they were given back to her. In her deep emotional identification with the humanity of God, she herself experienced a new solidarity with everything human in herself and others.⁵⁸

In one of her "most sublime visions," she "saw" with deep inner knowledge the humanity of Jesus, and *humanity in Jesus*, being taken into the bosom of the Divinity in whose presence she experienced herself to be. What did it mean for humanity to be taken into God? Certainly, she could never be the same. In fact, this vision was symbolic of a radically altered world view. She tells us she understood with contemplative intuition what Truth is and what it is for a human person "to walk in truth before Truth itself." She "knew," finally, that just as every truth imaginable depended upon this Truth, so all her human loves were a part of this love, and every grandeur she could know was a reflection of this Grandeur.⁵⁹

In the symbolism of one of the last experiences she describes in the book of her *Life*, we glimpse the extent to which she

passed over into the perspective of God regarding both her own self-understanding and her whole vision of reality. She writes:

[My soul] seemed to me to be like a brightly polished mirror, without any part on the back or sides or top or bottom that wasn't totally clear. In its center Christ our Lord was shown to me . . . It seemed to me I saw him clearly in every part of my soul, as though in a mirror. And this mirror also . . . was completely engraved upon the Lord himself by means of a loving communication I wouldn't know how to describe.⁶⁰

There is no vision in the whole of Teresa's writings that thrills me like this imagery. Teresa looked into herself, a mirror, and she saw Christ. There was nothing but this completed imprint of Christ, etched within her, totally filling the mirror. She looked at Christ and, yet, she saw herself—engraved upon the Lord. Christ, the self-knowledge of humanity, gave her to herself. We marvel at such mutual indwelling, such mutual imprinting, that speaks not only of radical self-donation but just as strongly of self-possession. Teresa's heart had found its dwelling place. Yet, she herself was a dwelling place. She was at home in her own house, her Self! "Each is transfigured in the other," says John. The truth of the self and the truth of the other were revealed, and the desire of the human heart was fulfilled without restriction. Teresa really experienced herself and her acts united to the self and acts of Christ. John of the Cross writes in *The Spiritual Canticle* that Christ "will really transform her into the beauty of both his created and uncreated Wisdom, and also into the beauty of the Word with his humanity."⁶¹ Could there be any deeper answer for Teresa to the question of ultimate reliability or the fear of abandonment? The mirror is a striking symbol of mystical consciousness all through spiritual literature. It shows us Teresa, the woman mystic, effectively connected in reciprocal mutuality with God and with the entire universe.

For, not only is her soul a mirror, not only is Christ a mirror, but for Teresa, Divinity is, as it were, a mirror or a very clear diamond, "much greater than all the world," in which she clearly sees everything in the universe joined together, everything part of the whole. All things are held in God—good and evil and all loves. And God is, after all, the embrace of human love, of friendship. The experience of Teresa deals a death blow not only to going it alone, but even going it alone with God.⁶²

DARK NIGHT

One might think that now Teresa's development was complete, but she tells of a time of deep pain and insatiable desire when she was overcome by a sense of total estrangement and

extreme desolation. Her human powers were paralyzed from the pain:

The soul begins to grow so weary that it ascends far above itself and all creatures. God places it in a desert so distant from all things, that however much it labors, it doesn't find a creature on earth that might accompany it . . . it desires only to die in that solitude.⁶³

The desert symbolizes Teresa's experience of human powerlessness before the incomprehensible mystery of salvation. It was Teresa's final temptation to disavow her self-worth and to succumb in despair to inferiority, subordination, and "wretchedness." She stood on the brink without a final answer to the question of ultimate reliability and value. She was challenged to see in the mirror without any defenses, filters, or support whatsoever, not only the stark reality of her own darkness, which was hard enough, but even the evil of humanity, and still believe in unconditional love.⁶⁴ This is the blackest time of night, John of the Cross tells us, when the last delicate shading of the image of Jesus, crucified and abandoned, is being sketched within the human heart in total darkness and absolute silence. He says, "The soul cannot see herself in the beauty of God unless she is transformed in the Wisdom of God" (divine Wisdom) . . . and made to resemble her . . . "who is the Word, the Son of God." But, the gate entering into the fullness of these riches of Wisdom is the cross of Jesus. It seems that a final phase of the transfiguration of Teresa and Jesus in each other could occur only in the dispossession of the Cross and the desperate scream of the heart, "My God, why have you abandoned me?" The image was, as it were, being finished when Teresa no longer had any consciousness of it, when she no longer saw it, or when all the images she had known had lost their cogency.⁶⁵ When we realize the power and the fullness of the image or vision of Christ in Teresa's experience over a lifetime, we can grasp the significance and extent of this deprivation.

In the Dark Night we are, in fact, always purified and transformed through what we cherish and through what gives us security and support. In other words, for Teresa, the relationship itself became the cause of pain. Its intense reciprocity actually highlighted human limitation, and even the limitations of God. This was Teresa's most profound experience of abandonment, and it preceded what both she and John call the "spiritual marriage." For Teresa and John, God seemed to walk away, seemed to break the connectedness: "Where have you hidden, Beloved, and left me to my moaning. You fled like the

stag after wounding me; I went out calling you and you were gone."⁶⁶

John throws a very clear light on this experience of Teresa. I want to move, therefore, to him for an understanding of this Dark Night which, he says, shows us the whole person deprived in her entire life situation. John, a man and a theologian, writes from the side of the powerless, the inferior, the poor and the abandoned. He tells of the darkness enwrapping their minds, their empty terror and hopelessness in the face of the overpowering burden of their memories, the anguished longing for a lost hope, a lost dream, a lost love. John's God of the Dark Night has such power over him, such power to disturb and control. He says:

God divests the faculties, affections and senses, both spiritual and sensory, interior and exterior. He leaves the intellect in darkness, the will in aridity, the memory in emptiness, and the affections in supreme affliction, bitterness and anguish, by depriving the soul of the feeling and satisfaction it previously obtained from spiritual blessings.⁶⁷

If we attempt to interpret John's teaching, we discover that here there is no reassurance nor affirmation that one can discern. All supports drop from one's consciousness and only the experience of emptiness, vulnerability and abandonment remains. In earlier times, the desert had woven its way in and out of life, bringing dryness, boredom and the absence of pleasure, but now the dark desert night eclipses the very support systems that have given life meaning and value and through which reassurance has been forthcoming. When John says the intellect is empty and in darkness, he seems to suggest that everything the person has understood and has accumulated by way of knowledge, everything that has given it "faith" and "God"—its concepts, theology, systems of thought, symbolic structures, relationships, institutions, et cetera—becomes meaningless. Nothing makes any sense, so that the mind, while full on one level of everything the person "knows," is in total darkness on another level—the level of meaning. The knowledge, the understanding, that has provided support for a lifetime, becomes a vast, painful, dark emptiness. In other words, nothing Teresa understood from her past experience gave her satisfaction or security. She explains: "The fact is that it seems everything the soul understands then adds to its pain, and that the Lord doesn't want it to profit in its entire being from anything else."⁶⁸

When John describes the emptiness of the memory, our minds stumble because we know human memory is *full* of

experience. But, in the afflicted, anguished memory, memories once so life-giving, significant and affirming now rise like piled ash in a bottomless void. The imagination can no longer connect life's memories to produce meaning and hope. One can speak of emptiness in the memory, not because one remembers nothing, but because all that the memory holds, which once provided motivation and security, which engendered trust, hope and promise for the future, now mocks the abandoned heart. Memories do not mean now what one thought or imagined they did. The memory is indeed empty, holding only the scattered remains of cherished experiences—experiences one thought revealed God and were the ground in which trust in the "Other" germinated and grew. Someone has written that the day will come when one must go on *in spite of* memories.⁶⁹

Yes, one must will to go on even when the will is touched by sorrows, deadness, affliction, and painful longing. We have to understand that abandonment and the seeming betrayal of trust and love are the heart of this dark experience. What one wants and needs and clings to more than anything in life, that which one cherishes above all else, is withdrawn, taken away, denied. Moreover, the loved one, the very focus of one's love and desire, becomes the cause of one's agony and distress. There is nothing so destructive of affirmation and, therefore, of motivation and meaning as the seeming rejection and abandonment by one who has loved you, who has touched your naked vulnerability, and on whom you have counted with complete assurance.

The destruction of mutuality, with its deep frustration of desire, is a humiliation, a dispossession, and a death which leave the person (the WILL) unable to grasp anything affectively. A transcendence is forced upon a person in which she is not at home, against which she rebels. Depression invades the whole structure of personality with the certainty that one's life is over and that there is nothing to live for because one's good is gone forever. Life becomes absurd when one feels that there is no one anywhere who is "for me." With no home within or without, the thought of a deeper union than one formerly knew is beyond comprehension. One looks, therefore, with the eyes of absolute doubt toward a hell of eternal nothingness. Certainly, an eternal life where affectivity and desire are fulfilled is a mockery. Bitterness, anger and hate well up like an uncontrollable flood, from the very heart of one's frustrated desire and betrayed love, to threaten destruction and collapse. Rejection and abandonment surface so much human "shadow" and all the unintegrated contents of the human soul.⁷⁰

Let us look at the dynamic in Teresa. The intensity of mutuality between her and Jesus Christ put in strong relief

human limitation and even the "limitations" of God. In the mirror everything was seen; there was too much self-knowledge, and the feeling of extreme unworthiness resulted. Her love was not great enough, she thought, and she was too "wretched" to be loved. Therefore, she was being abandoned once and for all. The temptation to inferiority was overpowering, and in her depression she was angry not only with herself but with those others who could not measure up to her expectations of human life. She describes her experience:

Nor does its will appear to be alive, but it seems to be in so great a solitude and so forsaken by all that this abandonment cannot be described in writing. For the whole world and its affairs give it pain, and no created thing provides it with company, nor does it want any company but only the Creator . . . it . . . dies with the longing to die.

. . . The devil gives a spirit of anger so displeasing that it seems as if I want to eat everyone up, without being able to help it . . .⁷¹

The only way to get a new perspective on this impasse, John tells us, is to accept the alternative vision of faith, hope and love and so pass over into the perspective of God:

We must lead the faculties of the soul to these three virtues and inform each faculty with one of them (faith in the intellect, hope in the memory, and love in the will) by stripping and darkening it of everything which is not conformable to these virtues.⁷²

We know the theological virtues are gifts of God, but we act and speak as if we can muster them up in crisis. So we hear, "She had such strong faith. Her faith got her through." This is, of course, true to some extent. However, in *this* darkness and hopelessness, when we no longer feel any faith or any hope, when we hang over the abyss of atheism, absolute doubt and total loss of trust, we truly learn *they are gifts* "made possible and effective by the divine self-bestowal itself," as Karl Rahner explains in his "Theology of Hope."⁷³ They become the only way, the only "response," to an *unsought*, inescapable darkness and emptiness. They are gifts that bring us blindness and agony, gifts we all but reject in our despair. They must overcome an anger, fear and rebellion that want to refuse grace rather than be left with "nothing." These gifts are known *only in retrospect* by their power to catch and bind the falling, desperate person to God. Perhaps we learn the critical importance of the theological virtues only at this stage of development! What is harder to understand is *WHY* we, perhaps, believe and hope in God truly, theologically, only when nothing else any longer sustains us. John must have struggled deeply to find the answer to human suffering to write as he does.

Thus, John explains, faith causes darkness in our very power to understand. Now it is at cross purposes with our ability to make *logical* sense out of life, death, and eternity, out of loss, rejection, and abandonment. Faith moves us into Mystery which is incomprehensible, unimaginable and uncontrollable. Only in some kind of searing loss, it seems, do we begin to know experientially that God is indeed *the DARKNESS* beyond all our concepts, images, experiences, feelings, and perceptions, and that, as John writes, no knowledge or feeling bears any resemblance to God.⁷⁴

The horizon of the mind is boundless. The one we call God dwells in this nameless and pathless expanse of our consciousness. When Jesus Christ seems to recede from our consciousness, when nothing human satisfies because of losses without and bitterness within and we, therefore, come to the very limits of human understanding, is this a signal that God waits over the brink? When we look back and nothing is left, when ahead we see only meaninglessness, when the images and representations of life are empty, is God then the unimaginable darkness over the brink?⁷⁵ John writes:

This [night] guided me
More surely than the noon
To where he waited for me
—Him I knew so well—
In a place where no one else appeared.⁷⁶

The hopelessness and emptiness of the Dark Night are precisely the condition that makes hope in the strictly theological sense possible. Hope can come into play only when we really are radically at the end, absolutely unable to find any further resources within ourselves to connect the memories, feelings, images, and experiences of life into a meaningful pattern or a promising future. Yet, it is hard to surrender to hope, hard to believe there is a possession worth possessing beyond everything we have known. Hope, as John of the Cross and Rahner see it, is free and trustful commitment to the impossible, to that which cannot be built out of what one possesses. In hope we allow ourselves finally to be grasped and drawn out of ourselves by the absolutely uncontrollable, who is God. Hope, therefore, perfects the memory [and imagination], John says, and prepares it for union with God.⁷⁷

Estrangement and abandonment administer the final test of love—genuine love of the self that continues to believe in its own worth, and a love of the other that will not surrender in the end to hate or violence. It is a love which overcomes the will to die, to give up, to commit suicide literally or figuratively, and instead

truly lives with the pain of its woundedness and longing. We can identify this experience in a woman, or a man, who is abandoned after many years of marriage or after total, self-giving love and who does not surrender finally to cynicism and hate. We see it when a spouse or child is taken away, tortured and murdered and a person continues to labor for the well-being and freedom of those left behind.

Any feeling of superiority or exclusivity is destroyed in this experience. In this sense, Dark Night is, indeed, a leveller. Love, care, compassion for “us,” a common humanity, flower here. When we stand in this kind of nakedness with all our masks ripped away, we see our common bonding, and we *know* that we are “equal.”⁷⁸ Then, faith affirms “for us” a Wisdom and light beyond our own reason. It affirms life and meaning beyond any carefully reasoned plans for meaningless destruction. Then, hope is exercised “for all” against domination, abandonment, and final annihilation. Then, love affirms “for us” the bondedness, communion and equality of all women and all men beyond rejection, violence and inequality.

TRANSFORMATION AFTER DARKNESS

Teresa's sense of herself survived the onslaught of the fire of self-knowledge. Fidelity in this dark faith, hope and love completed her transformation, and she was transfigured by the love, wisdom, and power of God.⁷⁹ The fear that had repeatedly made her a victim of male domination gave way to the experience of inner Power. Her feelings of inferiority and ignorance were put to rest in the certainty of the Wisdom she possessed. Her questions about ultimate exclusion, rejection, and abandonment were finally answered in the experience of a mutuality of love and gifts that could not be doubted. John explains Teresa's experience of wholeness in *The Spiritual Canticle*:

This is the transformation in the three persons in power, wisdom and love and thus the soul is like God through this transformation. God created her in his image and likeness that she might attain such resemblance.⁸⁰

Teresa speaks of this “imprinting” of the Blessed Trinity in the center of her being as an experience of indescribable understanding and communion. In her use of the word imprinting, we realize that the image of Christ that had been in process over a lifetime was completed. She truly was a likeness of God. John says: “The Spouse will really transform her into the beauty of both created and uncreated Wisdom, and also into the beauty of the union of the Word with his humanity.”⁸¹

The totality and depth of Teresa's relationship to God were symbolized in a beautiful vision of the risen Jesus when she was fifty-seven years old. He gave her his right HAND, as one gives his hand in marriage to his bride, and told her that now it was time that she consider as her own what belonged to him and that he would take care of what was hers. The hand which Teresa experienced in so many ways throughout her life was finally the symbol of the fulfillment of her desire, for Jesus said to her:

Behold this nail; it is a sign you will be my bride from today on. Until now you have not merited this; from now on not only will you look after my honor as being the honor of your Creator, King and God, but you will look after it as my true bride. My honor is yours and yours mine.⁸²

In the nail we understand that all the painful past was brought into this union. The nail sealed forever Teresa's identification with the dying, abandoned Jesus. Because they had shared a common pain, all their possessions were now held in common. John tells us the soul is called the bride of the Son of God to signify her equality with him. God, he says, "makes her love him with the very strength with which he loves her. Transforming her into his love . . . he gives her his own strength by which she can love him . . . She always desired this equality . . . for a lover cannot be satisfied if [she] fails to feel that [she] loves as much as [she] is loved."⁸³ For God and for Teresa, the heart of equality is love. Only love creates equality. Love gives equality. Love receives equality.

It is interesting to see honor appear as a symbol of the "spiritual marriage." It is another symbol of equality. In sixteenth century Spain, honor was prized more than life itself. It was *the* value that determined personal worth and social acceptance. In her writings and her reform, Teresa was, like the people of her time, "obsessed with honor which stands out everywhere and in the most unexpected passages."⁸⁴ Here we see Teresa's concern for honor (the material of ordinary human life and culture) transformed into a symbol of equality and love and made the heart of the mutuality. The nail of Jesus' cross, the honor of Teresa's Spain: real life symbols to show the total sharing of life in God's world.

Now, John tells us, the person "always walks in festivity," and so John of the Cross sings for Teresa at this point:

Let us rejoice, Beloved,
Let us go forth to behold ourselves in your beauty,
To the mountain and to the hill,
To where the pure water flows,
And further, deep into the thicket.⁸⁵

This means, he says, "Transform me into the beauty of divine Wisdom and make me resemble [her] which is the Word, the Son of God." And then "she asks that he inform her with the beauty of this other lesser wisdom, contained in his creatures. . . . The soul cannot see herself in the beauty of God unless she is transformed in the Wisdom of God, in which she sees herself in possession of earthly and heavenly things . . . God permits it in this state to discern its beauty and he entrusts to it the gifts and virtues he has bestowed."⁸⁶

Beyond anything she could have dreamed of, Teresa, *the woman*, was affirmed in a definitive way. In the face of eternal Wisdom she saw the giftedness of her own self, precisely as woman, and the power and possibilities of the insight she now possessed. With God's view of things—her mind united to the mind of God, her will to the will of God, her memory attuned "so as to have in its mind the eternal years"—she saw a new way of life rooted in the reality of what she experienced: love, connectedness, relationship, communion, and equality.⁸⁷

She envisioned, in fact, a new social order where all were to be equal.⁸⁸ In her small communities of contemplative women, Teresa set in motion a reversal of the social and religious order by a spiritual one that would eradicate the highest principles of the established order and undermine the current images of social status. Her fearless struggle to destroy concern for honor and wealth, and therefore uphold the value of person over money and ancestry, her unswerving struggle for the recognition of women's rights to deep interior prayer and therefore to significant service in the Church at a time of great ecclesial danger and turmoil: these constituted the framework on which she built her renewal of the Carmelite Order in the sixteenth century Church, as well as her teaching on prayer, wholeness, and union with God.⁸⁹

While John was also a major figure in the Reform of Carmel, and contributed deeply to its spiritual formation, his creativity lives majestically and above all else in his poetry which has survived for four hundred years. It witnesses, as nothing else can, to the grandeurs of an equality of love with God. John was so affirmed by God in his life that nothing could destroy his self confidence. Though he was persecuted, blamed and pushed aside after Teresa's death, he could die singing of the treasures of God and the beauty of the human person living in communion and equality with God. It is not without significance that one of the reasons he was removed from a leadership position and deprived of influence in the Carmelite Order was his defense of the rights of the Carmelite Nuns, the daughters of that great woman Teresa who was, he knew, his companion and equal not

only in the depth and intensity of her experience of God but even in her ability to write about the ways of God.

CONCLUSION

John of the Cross obviously writes from his own experience. However, he also describes Teresa's experience, and he describes the experience of many women, past and present. His doctrine on the Dark Night raises the painful, paradoxical question: Is it necessary for women today to "accept" the place in which they find themselves and stand without the comfortable connections and belongingness and loves they have known; to stay in the place where previous understandings and memories are not consolations but only burdens, and where **faith and hope** in the face of the unacceptable, the totally unfathomable, are the absolutely only doorway to insight, healing, vision, creative new life, the intimate touch of communion and equality? Must we be able to stand without the God we once "saw" and even, to some degree, the understanding and support of men and institutions, as Teresa did? In *The Living Flame*, John answers through the author of the book of wisdom: "If the spirit of the One who has power descends upon you, do not abandon your place (the place and the site of your probation), for the cure will make great sins cease."⁹⁰

Our dark night comes to us because of our particular time and place in history. The consciousness of our age shapes it just as the particular awareness of Teresa's time shaped hers. When we can respond with enduring faith, hope and love to the dark presence of an incomprehensible God who calls us to something new, we will perhaps, like Teresa, be led finally to the fulfillment of our deep human desires in a relationship of love and equality. Then we might know the way to create and express a vision of connectedness and equality in our own groups and communities and thereby move our world and our Church beyond the unequal power relations that are tearing them apart. The only question is this: Can we, women and men, do it without becoming mystics? In Teresa, we see that becoming a mystic, a contemplative, is possible for fragile human people like us. Moreover, in her transformation we understand just how true it is that the degree of our religious consciousness, the depth of our communion with God, does indeed condition the *DEPTH* of our experience of equality and solidarity.

In tracing the image of Christ through Teresa's writings, and following the movement of her self-understanding from inferiority, confusion of heart and fear of abandonment to connectedness, mutuality and equality of love, we grasp the centrality of

Jesus Christ in the Christian mystical experience. Moreover, an analysis of her complex experience/visions reveals a Christology that certainly does not validate either the subordination or the exclusion of women. On the contrary, the "world" of these texts reveals quite a different vision of reality, a vision that confronts and challenges our personal and societal lives. Here I can only say that as I have appropriated these texts in this study, the inequalities we maintain, one toward another, in so many of our relationships and structures, appear absurd to me—the work of the evil one who prefers inferiority, exclusion, and submission to equality of love.

Teresa makes an interesting comment about women at the end of the book of her *Life*. I want to close with this:

There are many more women than men to whom the Lord grants these favors. This I heard from the saintly Friar Peter of Alcantara—and I, too, have observed it—who said that women make much more progress along this road than men do. He gave excellent reasons for this, all in favor of women; but there's no need to mention them here.⁹¹

Perhaps John agreed because he wrote both the commentary of *The Spiritual Cantic* and *The Living Flame* for women.

NOTES

¹ See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), p. 349.

² See John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* (CW), trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1973), *The Spiritual Cantic*, st. 13, no. 7; *The Living Flame*, st. 2, nos. 9-12.

³ John, CW, "Introduction," p. 23; see Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila* (CW), trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1976-1985), vol. 1: *Spiritual Testimonies*, no. 31; vol. 2: *The Interior Castle*, VI, chap. 9, no. 17, with note no. 14. (This article's extensive end notes are provided as an aid for in-depth study of Teresa's and John's texts. I have, however, in some cases grouped a number of references for a single section into one note.)

⁴ John, CW, "Introduction," p. 30.

⁵ See Elizabeth Johnson, "Jesus, the Wisdom of God: A Biblical Basis for Non-Androcentric Christology," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* (Dec. 1985): 263.

⁶ John, CW, *The Spiritual Cantic*, st. 28, no. 1; st. 39, no. 6; see also st. 30, no. 6, and *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, chap. 5, no. 1.

⁷ John, CW, *The Spiritual Cantic*, st. 32, no. 6; st. 38, nos. 3-4.

⁸ John, CW, *The Spiritual Cantic*, st. 12; st. 11, no. 12; *The Living Flame*, st. 3, no. 45; see also *The Ascent*, Book I, chap. 13, no. 3; chap. 14, no. 2; *The Spiritual Cantic*, chap. 37.

⁹ Teresa, CW, vol. 1: *Life*, chap. 4, no. 7; chap. 11, no. 9; chap. 12,

nos. 2-3; see also chap. 13, no. 11; chap. 12, no. 22; vol. 2: *The Way of Perfection*, chaps. 26, 27, and 28, nos. 3-4.

¹⁰ According to Colin P. Thompson, *The Poet and The Mystic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 10: "One of the most insistent calls echoing through the whole [western] tradition is the renunciation of the self and every thing created for God. Its roots lie in pre-Christian antiquity and it occurs in other faiths." (See note on Zaehner's *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* in Thompson.)

¹¹ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 2, nos. 1-8.

¹² *Ibid.*, chap. 5, nos. 5 and 4. See nos. 4-10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, chap. 5, nos. 8, 11.

¹⁴ As Teresa here describes her fervent life and her carefulness of conscience, one is reminded of the description she wrote years later of the good, reasonable, careful person in the third dwelling places. See *Life*, chap. 6, and *The Interior Castle*, III.

¹⁵ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 7, no. 1; chap. 6, no. 9.

¹⁶ In *The Seeing Eye, Hermeneutical Phenomenology in the Study of Religion* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University, 1982), pp. 78-79, Walter L. Brennen et al. write: "Seeing is a metaphor for a broad spectrum of cognitive experiences, including visions that come from beyond the boundaries to which senses and reason extend and revelations that have radically changed people's views of the world and of the meaning of life. . . Sight involves a realization of what was previously undisclosed. . . and it implies a prior blindness to that which was always there to be seen if only one had had the eyes to see it."

¹⁷ See Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 7, nos. 6-9; see also J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1971), for the entry on toad to understand the fascinating and even lethal effect of a toad's gaze. See also *Life*, chap. 22, no. 13, where Teresa compares the person at this stage of development to a toad who tried to fly on its own.

¹⁸ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 8, no. 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, chap. 8, no. 2; chap. 7, no. 6; chap. 8, no. 3.

²⁰ See Cirlot, *Dictionary*, p. 1, "abandonment." Although we cannot pursue this here, we become aware at this point of significant relationships between some of the major symbols in Teresa's writings: garden, castle, way, and even water which is given little by little, and abandonment and death/resurrection.

²¹ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 8, no. 12.

²² See Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 9, nos. 1-7.

²³ *Ibid.*, chap. 10, no. 8. See also all of chap. 10; chap. 22, no. 12; chap. 23. This is the prayer of quiet.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, chap. 24, nos. 4-5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. 24, no. 5; see also chap. 25, no. 1, and John, *CW, The Ascent*, Book II, chap. 31.

²⁶ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 24, no. 6; see *The Way of Perfection*, chaps. 4, 6, 7.

²⁷ Cirlot, p. 80; see Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 25, nos. 14-15.

²⁸ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 25, nos. 17, 18, 19.

²⁹ Teresa, *CW, The Way of Perfection*, chap. 3, no. 7.

³⁰ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 26, no. 5.

³¹ Teresa, *Works, The Way of Perfection*, chap. 22, no. 6.

³² *Ibid.*, chap. 22, no. 6; chap. 21, nos. 2-3.

³³ *Ibid.*, chap. 22, no. 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, "Introduction," p. 25; see also chap. 25.

³⁵ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 28, no. 18.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. 27, no. 6; see also nos. 2-3 for Teresa's description of an intellectual vision.

³⁷ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 27, no. 14. Using the "categories of interiority" of Bernard Lonergan and his concept of intersubjective union, James Robertson Price III of Georgia State University has done a helpful study called *Lonergan and the Foundations of a Contemporary Mystical Theology*. One would think the study was done using Teresa, herself, as a subject for the research. See Lonergan's *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), pp. 3-25.

³⁸ See Elizabeth Johnson, "Incomprehensibility of God and the Image of God Male and Female," *Theological Studies* (1984): 462-63; see also Susan Cady et al., *Sophia* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986). While Teresa's development, supported by John of the Cross' experience and teaching, may throw light from the mystical tradition on Wisdom studies, feminist research may open up new horizons in the interpretation of John and Teresa, too.

³⁹ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 27, no. 11; chap. 28, no. 1.

⁴⁰ Ntozake Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), p. 63.

⁴¹ John, *CW, The Ascent*, Book II, chap. 15, no. 4; *The Dark Night*, Book II, chap. 24, no. 3; see also *The Spiritual Canticle*, st. 37, no. 2.

⁴² Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 28, no. 1; Teresa tells us that she was always afraid of each new experience of Jesus Christ.

⁴³ Elizabeth Koenig writes about this in her doctoral dissertation, *The Book of Showings of Julian of Norwich: A Test Case for Paul Ricoeur's Theories of Metaphor and Imagination*. Koenig draws on D. W. Winnicott's "Mirror-role of Mother and Family in Child Development," in *Playing and Reality* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1971).

⁴⁴ See John, *CW, The Ascent*, Book II, chap. 17. This is a key passage in understanding the developmental aspect of John's teaching. Moreover, it reveals his epistemology.

⁴⁵ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 28, nos. 5, 11, 13; see also *The Interior Castle*, VI, chap. 1, no. 4.

⁴⁶ For this whole section, see Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 29, nos. 2-7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. 29, nos. 13, 10; see *The Interior Castle*, VI, chap. 2, no. 4.

⁴⁸ Teresa writes at length about seeing the devil. This is one of the ways she describes the Dark Night. See, for example, chap. 31, nos. 2, 9. Darkness weaves its way in and out of Teresa's experience over a lifetime, as we see in her writings. Because I have written elsewhere about earlier phases of the Dark Night, I have chosen to concentrate later in this essay on Teresa's most profound experience of abandonment, just before the "spiritual marriage." See note no. 66.

⁴⁹ In an article on Thérèse of Lisieux, I have written at more length

about the symbol of heart. See Constance FitzGerald, "Contemplative Life and Charismatic Presence," *Spiritual Life*, Spring 1983, pp. 18-30.

⁵⁰ John, *CW, The Living Flame*, st. 2, nos. 10-12.

⁵¹ In the *Life*, chap. 37, no. 4, Teresa writes: "The vision of Christ left upon me an impression of his most extraordinary beauty, and the impression remains to this day."

⁵² *Ibid.*, chap. 33, no. 11.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, chap. 33, nos. 14, 16; chap. 36, no. 24; chap. 34, no. 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, chap. 36, no. 17; chap. 33, no. 12.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. 34, nos. 8, 3; see also *The Interior Castle*, VI, chap. 8, no. 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. 34, no. 17; see also nos. 8-12.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*; see vision in chap. 39, no. 1, and chaps. 38 and 39, to see how and why Teresa's prayers for others were answered.

⁵⁸ See Teresa, *CW, Spiritual Testimonies*, 2, no. 4.

⁵⁹ See Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 38, nos. 17, 18; chap. 40, nos. 1-4; *The Interior Castle*, VI, chap. 10, no. 7.

⁶⁰ Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 40, no. 5 with note no. 6; see also *The Interior Castle*, VI, chap. 10, no. 2; *The Way of Perfection*, chap. 28, nos. 9-12; *Spiritual Testimonies*, 20, nos. 13-14.

⁶¹ St. 38, no. 1; see Cirlot, *Dictionary*, "mirror," pp. 211-12; *The Interior Castle*, VII, chap. 2, no. 8; *The Living Flame*, st. 1, nos. 9-13. To understand the kind of affirmation Teresa received, see *CW, Life*, chap. 39, no. 22; chap. 40, no. 12.

⁶² Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 40, nos. 9-10.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, chap. 20, no. 9; see chap. 20, nos. 8-16; chap. 30, nos. 8-14. Teresa tells us this time of estrangement that occurred after everything else she writes of in her *Life*. However, she completed that work long before she died and before she reached the Spiritual Marriage.

⁶⁴ See John, *CW, The Living Flame*, st. 1, no. 20, and Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 40, no. 10.

⁶⁵ John, *CW, The Spiritual Cantic*, st. 36, nos. 7, 8, 13; see *Life*, chap. 20, no. 11.

⁶⁶ John, *CW, The Spiritual Cantic*, st. 1; see *Spiritual Testimonies*, 22, no. 2. In my article, "Impasse and Dark Night," in *Living with Apocalypse* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), pp. 94-116, I deal with Dark Night in the sense mentioned here. There I draw on Michael J. Buckley, "Atheism and Contemplation," *Theological Studies* 40 (1979).

⁶⁷ *The Dark Night*, Book II, chap. 3, no. 3; see also chap. 4, no. 1; chap. 16, no. 1.

⁶⁸ *Spiritual Testimonies*, 59, no. 14.

⁶⁹ See John, *CW, The Ascent*, Book II, chap. 2, no. 3; chap. 9, no. 5; *Life*, chap. 30, no. 8.

⁷⁰ To understand this interpretation, see John, *CW, The Dark Night*, Book II, chap. 4-12; *The Living Flame*, st. 1, nos. 20-22; Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 32, nos. 1-4.

⁷¹ Teresa, *CW, Spiritual Testimonies*, 54, no. 14; *Life*, chap. 30, no. 13.

⁷² *The Ascent*, Book II, chap. 6, no. 6; see all of chap. 6 for John's doctrine on the theological virtues; also see *The Dark Night*, Book II, chap. 21, no. 11; chap. 13, no. 11.

⁷³ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* X (New York: Seabury, 1977), pp. 245-47.

⁷⁴ See *The Ascent*, Book II, chap. 3, for John's teaching on faith; see also chap. 4, 1-3; chap. 8, pp. 125 ff.; chap. 9, p. 129; *The Dark Night*, Book II, chap. 16, no. 8, par. 2; Teresa, *CW, Life*, chap. 30, no. 12.

⁷⁵ Juan Luis Segundo calls this the passage from anthropological faith to authentic faith in *Faith and Ideologies* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984), p. 166. Karl Rahner has helped me to bring into dialogue contemporary experience and John of the Cross' teaching. See "The Experience of the Spirit," *Theological Investigations* XVIII (New York: Crossroad, 1983), pp. 196-97.

⁷⁶ John, *CW, The Dark Night* poem, st. 4.

⁷⁷ *The Dark Night*, Book II, chap. 21, no. 11; *The Ascent*, Book III, chap. 15, no. 1; chap. 7, no. 2; chap. 11, nos. 1-2; see Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of Hope," *Theological Investigations* X, pp. 242-59; "Theology of Death," *Theological Investigations* XIII (New York: Crossroad, 1983), pp. 176-84.

⁷⁸ Marie Celeste Fadden, O.C.D., of Reno Carmel, has captured the reality of this solidarity in a painting of incredible power and feeling that she executed for Edith Stein's beatification. It shows Edith at the gate of Auschwitz, identified and one with the Jewish men, women and children being herded to their death.

⁷⁹ For John of the Cross, purification and transformation are two sides of a single coin. The same fire that burns the log black causes the blackened wood to burst into brilliant flame. This realization pervades *The Living Flame*. See, for example, st. 1, nos. 1-25, especially no. 1.

⁸⁰ John, *CW, The Spiritual Cantic*, st. 39, no. 4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, st. 38, no. 1; st. 42; *The Interior Castle*, VII, chap. 1, nos. 6, 7.

⁸² John, *CW, Spiritual Testimonies*, 31.

⁸³ John, *CW, The Spiritual Cantic*, st. 38, nos. 3, 4. See also *The Living Flame*, st. 3, nos. 78-79, for equality.

⁸⁴ Teofanes Egido, O.C.D., "The Historical Setting of St. Teresa's Life," trans. Michael Dodd and Steven Payne, *Carmelite Studies* 1 (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1980), p. 152.

⁸⁵ John, *CW, The Spiritual Cantic*, st. 36.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, st. 36, nos. 6, 7, 8; *The Living Flame*, st. 1, no. 31.

⁸⁷ John, *CW, The Living Flame*, st. 1, no. 32; st. 2, no. 34; st. 1, no. 22; st. 4, nos. 5, 6, 7; *The Spiritual Cantic*, st. 37, no. 3; st. 39, no. 11.

⁸⁸ Teresa, *CW, The Way of Perfection*, chap. 27, no. 6.

⁸⁹ See Egido, "The Historical Setting of St. Teresa's Life," p. 130.

⁹⁰ St. 1, no. 19.

⁹¹ Chap. 40, no. 8.