

**THE THEOLOGY OF SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS**

**A Descriptive Analysis and Evaluation of His Thought**

---

by

**John Wellington Patterson**

---

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of Edinburgh**

**September 1, 1970**



# ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Name of Candidate..... **John Wellington Patterson**  
Address.....  
Degree..... **Doctor of Philosophy** ..... Date..... **September 1, 1970**  
Title of Thesis..... **The Theology of Saint John of the Cross -- A Descriptive Analysis and  
Evaluation of His Thought**

Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591) was beatified by Clement X in 1675, canonized by Benedict XIII in 1726, and declared Doctor of the Catholic Church by Pius XI in 1926. He was the principal theologian of the Discalced Carmelite Reform in Spain during the latter years of the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent but his theological significance extends far beyond the Carmelite and counter-reformational context, for, in point of fact, his works reveal very little of the doctrinal and ecclesiastical disputes which were being waged in Christendom in general, and in his own religious order in particular. His primary literary purpose is neither apologetic nor polemical. He is a theological poet who sought to exegete his own lyrics with extensive prose commentaries whose content is an empirical theology, and whose purpose is a didactic explanation of the personal experience of God.

Three principal doctrinal works of John have survived to the present day: The Dark Night of the Ascent of Mount Carmel, The Spiritual Canticle, and The Living Flame of Love. Other minor poems and writings of John are extant, but they contain little of theological value which is not found amply exegeted in the major works.

John's chief contribution to the history of Christian thought is his empirico-mystical approach to theology. His epistemological method is empirical rather than speculative, and the content of his theology is more ontological than discursive.

Beginning with the Pauline doctrine that "faith comes by hearing," John of the Cross seeks to know God by auditive faith rather than by dialectical reasoning. His idea that God can be known intuitively through the Logos appears to have its rootage in the epistemological concept of Duns Scotus rather than that of Augustine (Illumination) or Aquinas (Abstraction). He clearly perceives the immense distinction between a cognition about God through the human agent intellect and a personal encounter with the Being of God through the direct impact of the Word upon man by the Spirit. He is adamant in his rejection of all forms of natural theology and discursive reasoning as means for knowing God out of Himself. Faith alone is held out as the only proportionate means for man to experience the Reality of God, and, in John's doctrine, even faith is a God-given virtue (along with love and hope) which man can appropriate solely by a humble receiving. This faith is rooted in divine sovereignty and grace and allows no admixture human self-attainment for its fulfillment.

*Use other side if necessary.*

The goal of John's theology is union of the human and divine natures, and to realize this the Saint expounds his lengthy doctrine of divinely infused contemplation. This teaching begins with discursive meditation in order to establish the habitual discipline which is necessary for the Spirit's sanctifying work in the soul. Basically, the reason for infused contemplation in John's system is to accommodate the soul for divine occupancy, and such a process requires the radical transforming work of the Word and Spirit. Of particular theological interest in this divine work of soul perfection is John's doctrine of transcendental "touches" by which the Logos makes sanctifying contacts with the substance of the soul. These "touches" have both a purging and an illuminating effect in man's nature and they elevate the soul into greater dialogical communion with God.

Ultimately the process of contemplation results in the spiritual marriage of the Word with the soul, and here the Mystical Doctor's teaching on divine union is presented. The three theological virtues--faith, hope, and love--and the three Persons of the Trinity are shown by John to be respectively the means and the Agents of this oneness between God and man. The union is simultaneously cognitive and moral, operational and volitional, ontological and eschatological. It has both permanent and transient elements, and, though it does not eliminate his creaturely existence, it does unite man so intimately with the operations and essence of the Trinity than man actually becomes a son of God by adoptive participation in the Godhead.

The distinctive contributions of John are to be noted in his empirical approach to divine knowledge and in his insistence that faith and faith alone is the means for the unitive experience of God. His theology is also helpful in defining the role of images in Christian worship and the extra-sacramental nature of divine grace. However, the terminology he employs to describe man's union with God is excessive at times, and his theological environment so circumscribed some of his more Biblical ideas that it inhibited him from carrying them out to their rightful end in his writings. This is true of his doctrines of Christology, Divine Grace, and the Church. His theology, consequently, suffers severely in these three basic areas, but in the main his emphasis on the ontological and operational aspects of intuitively received knowledge from God is outstanding and deserves greater examination and application within both the Protestant and Roman traditions of the Christian Church.

To

Patricia, John, Jr., Leighanne,

Michelle, Scott, and Heather

---

Who graciously showed understanding

and patience

while their father completed

this study.

## PREFACE

The study which follows has been pursued over extended periods of time since 1961. Serving as professor theology in the International Theological Seminary of Cali, Colombia, the author became interested in the theology of John of the Cross as a possible unifying element in the theological impasse which exists in South America between Protestants and Roman Catholics. The pronouncements of John XXIII and the reforms set in motion by the Second Vatican Council have aided greatly in the improvement of relations within the Church of Latin America. However, doctrinal agreement is still remote in practice, and it was felt that the empirical approach of John of the Cross could help to bridge the deep theological gap.

Completion of the present study has verified the original contention, for the theology of St. John is sufficiently grounded in faith that it fulfills the Protestant insistence on sola fide, and, at the same time, it stays sufficiently within the orthodoxy of Romanism that it has been awarded the highest papal approval.

To fulfill the requirements for the following analysis of John's theology, it was necessary to visit the principal centers of Carmelite literature in Spain and other parts of Europe. The research was carried on during the Spring and Summer of 1967, and the author is indebted

to the following persons who made possible special investigation in their libraries and who rendered Christian hospitality of the most generous nature: The Prior of the Carmelite Priory, Kensington, London; Padre Eulogio de San Juan de la Cruz and Padre Efren de la Madre de Dios of the Carmelite Priory in Madrid; Padre Miguel Angel Diaz of the Discalced Carmelite Priory, Burgos; and Fathers Ernest Larkin and Scott Robinson of White Friars Hall, Washington, D. C.

Thanks is rendered also to the staff members of the following libraries who graciously gave assistance in research and made available manuscripts and other special materials: National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; Seminario Teologico Bautista Internacional, Cali, Colombia; La Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid; La Biblioteca Carmelitana, Burgos; and Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia.

Other authorities who made valuable bibliographical and general suggestions were: Father Bede Edwards, Prior of the Carmelite Priory, Oxford; Mgr. Francis Davis, the Presbytery, Birmingham, England; Dr. John McKay of Chevy Chase, Maryland; Professor John McIntyre, New College, Edinburgh; and Padre Niceto de Aguirre of the Priorato Carmelitano, Pereira, Colombia. Dr. Henry Brimm, Librarian, and Mrs. Martha Aycock, Reference Librarian, both of the Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, have been especially

helpful in supplying study facilities and in securing Carmelite books on a loan basis from other libraries. To each of these renowned persons the author owes a particular debt of appreciation. Special gratitude also is due Professor Thomas F. Torrance, New College, for directional and literary guidance through the writing stages of the present study. His abiding interest and encouragement have been a significant factor in the fruition of the research and development of the analysis which follows.

Those who assisted in the typing and proof-reading are: Mrs. George Wilson, Mrs. John Patterson, Mrs. Samuel DeBord, Mrs. Julian Gary, and Mrs. Gordon English. The author's appreciation of each of them is hereby acknowledged, but can never be fully expressed. He also is deeply grateful to Mrs. Lorraine Patman, who graciously supplied financial assistance for one year of study at New College, of the University of Edinburgh.

John W. Patterson

1 September, 1970  
Richmond, Virginia

## CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE . . . . .	iii
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1

### PART I

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF ST.

JOHN OF THE CROSS . . . . .	6
I. General Historical Context . . . . .	6
Sixteenth Century Spain . . . . .	6
Biographical Highlights . . . . .	8
Christian Origins in Spain . . . . .	13
Islamic Occupation in Spain. . . . .	14
The Inquisition Centuries. . . . .	16
The Carmelite Context. . . . .	21
II. General Introduction to the Writings of St. John of the Cross	26
The Nature of His Literary Works . . . . .	26
The <u>Ascent</u> and <u>Dark Night of the Soul</u>	
The <u>Spiritual Canticle</u>	
The <u>Living Flame of Love</u>	
The Minor Works of John	
His Principal Literary Sources . . . . .	33
The Bible	



Patristic Theology

Scholastic Theology

Other Influences

## PART II

### ANALYSIS OF THE THEOLOGICAL APPROACH OF JOHN

OF THE CROSS . . . . .	60
I. The Epistemological Basis of John's Theology . . . . .	60
The Medieval Epistemological Modes . . . . .	60
Plato-Augustinian	
Aristotelian-Thomistic	
Duns Scotus	
John of the Cross Related to these Theories	
The Basic Role of Intuition in John's Epistemology . . . . .	66
Intuitive Cognition of Being	
Volitional Aspects	
II. Empirical Verification in John's Theology . . . . .	84
The Empirical Nature of John's Theology . . . . .	85
The Practical Bases of John's Empiricism . . . . .	86
Divine Knowledge Out of God's Being	
Divine Knowledge by A-posteriori Modes	
His Empirical Use of Scripture	

III. The Primacy of Faith in John's Theology . . . . .	112
The Function of Faith in Relation to Divine Knowledge. . .	114
The Ontological Nature of Divine Knowledge	
Faith As the Proportionate Means of Divine Knowledge	
The Primary Relation of Faith to Man's Intellect . . . . .	120
Faith Nullifies Attachment to Intellect-Acquired Knowledge	
Faith As Active and Passive in Relation to Divine Knowledge	
Faith and Reason Related to Divine Knowledge	
The Source and Ground of Faith. . . . .	147
The Divine Source and Cause of Faith	
The Role of the Incarnation in Faith	
Faith As Grounded in Divine Sovereign Grace	

### PART III

THE DOCTRINE OF EMPIRICAL CONTEMPLATION . . . . .	159
I. The Nature and Context of Empirical Contemplation . . . . .	160
Definitions of Contemplation . . . . .	160
The Meditational Context of Contemplation . . . . .	162
The Transition to the Divine Mode of Thought . . . . .	167

	The Infused Aspect of Contemplation . . . . .	175
	"Infused" versus "Acquired" Contemplation	
	Infused Contemplation Related to Discursive Meditation	
II.	The Purpose and Accessi/vility of Empirical Contemplation	180
	The Purpose of Empirical Contemplation . . . . .	181
	The Accessibility of Empirical Contemplation . . . . .	182
III.	The Stages of Empirical Contemplation . . . . .	185
	The Preparational Stage. . . . .	191
	The Intensification Stage . . . . .	195
	Its Distinctive Role in Relation to Divine Union	
	The Perfected Stage . . . . .	210
	The Beatific Stage . . . . .	213
IV.	The Theological Elements of Empirical Contemplation . .	215
	Practical Elements. . . . .	215
	Perfectionistic Elements . . . . .	218
	Related to the Doctrine of Sin	
	Related to God in His Triune Nature	
	Eschatological Elements . . . . .	228
	The Relation to Natural Theology . . . . .	243

PART IV

<b>THE EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE UNION . . . . .</b>	<b>248</b>
<b>Introduction. . . . .</b>	<b>248</b>
<b>The Theological Significance of the Doctrine</b>	
<b>The Dual Perspective of the Doctrine</b>	
<b>Directional Orientation</b>	
<b>I. Basic Theological Assumptions Relative to Divine Union. . . . .</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>The Distinctive Modes of Divine Union . . . . .</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>The Meaning Given to the Term "Habit" . . . . .</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>Psychological Framework. . . . .</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>II. The Nature of Divine Union. . . . .</b>	<b>267</b>
<b>Divine Union as a Progressive Transformation . . . . .</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>The Empirical Necessity of the Transformation</b>	
<b>The Agent and Extent of the Transformation</b>	
<b>Limitations of the Transformation</b>	
<b>The Moral and Volitional Elements of Divine Union. . . . .</b>	<b>279</b>
<b>Divine Love Related to the Will</b>	
<b>Divine Love: The Ontological and Moral Content</b>	
<b>The Cognitive Elements of Divine Union . . . . .</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>The Mode of Cognitive Infusion</b>	
<b>The Nature and Effects of Cognitive Union</b>	

The Ontological Elements of Divine Union . . . . . 298

References Relating to Deification and Absorption

The Theological Basis for Ontological Union

The Nature of Ontological Adoption

The Effects of Ontological Union

III. The Means of Divine Union . . . . . 325

The Inter-Relation of the Theological Virtues. . . . . 326

Operational Inter-Relation

Substantial Inter-Relations

The Distinctive Role of Faith As a Means of Divine Union 331

Faith and the Intellect

Faith and the Unitive Experience

Faith Only

The Distinctive Role of Hope As a Means of Divine Union 338

Hope and the Memory

Hope and the Unitive Experience

The Distinctive Role of Love As a Means of Divine Union 344

Love and the Will

The Nature of Infused Love

Love As Essentially Purging and Illuminating "Fire"

Unitive Love: Communion Degree

Unitive Love: Total Transformation Degree

Unitive Love: Maturing and Inflaming Degree

IV. The Relative Permanency and Intensification of Divine

Union . . . . . 373

The Relative Permanency of the Present Experience . . . 374

Permanent Elements of Divine Union

The Transient Elements of Divine Union

The Awareness of Divine Union

The Relative Permanency of the Eschatological Elements 381

The Theological Necessity for Eschatological Union

The Divine Assurance of Eschatological Union

PART V

A THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE TEACHINGS OF

JOHN OF THE CROSS . . . . . 387

I. Contributions of John of the Cross to Theological Thought 387

Contributions to the Doctrine of Epistemology . . . . . 387

Affirmation of the Intuitive Character of Divine

Knowledge

Theological Elements of John's Concept of Divine

Knowledge

John's Epistemological Method and Empirical Science

Contributions to the Doctrine of Christian Perfection . . . . .	406
The Incarnational Pattern for Christian Perfection	
The Grounding of Christian Perfection in Divine Grace	
The Social Aspects of Christian Perfection	
Contributions to the Doctrine of Divine Union . . . . .	411
The Christocentric Nature of the Experience	
The Dialogical Method of the Knowledge	
Divinization Effects of the Divine Union Experience	
Contributions to the Doctrine of Christian Worship . . . . .	417
The Foundational Function of Images in Worship	
The Extra-Sacramental Experience of Divine Grace	
Contributions to the Mystical Element in Christianity . . . . .	423
The Significance of "Mystical" in John of the Cross	
The Relevance of "Mystical Theology"	
<b>II. A Critical Assessment of the Teachings of John of the Cross</b>	<b>438</b>
The Relative Obscurity of John's Theology . . . . .	438
Mode of Expression	
Ascetical Nature of His Teachings	
Principal Problems in John's Theology . . . . .	446
Illuminism	

Deification and Absorptionism

Ontologism

Relation of John's Teaching to Biblical Theology . . . . 460

The Doctrine of God

The Doctrine of Divine Union

BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . . 477



## INTRODUCTION

Before proceeding directly to the consideration of John of the Cross and his mystical treatises, it will be helpful to indicate something of the nature, scope, and limitations of the theological analysis which this present study attempts to make of his theology. Also, other matters relative to textual problems, translations, and secondary sources of John's works require brief mention as an introduction to this theology.

It will be noted that the sub-title of the present work is: "The Theology of John of the Cross, A Descriptive Analysis and Evaluation of His Thought." This qualifying supplement was felt advisable because of the distinctive methodological approach made necessary in regard to John's theology, due to the nature and content of his thought and expression. Accordingly, the method used in the following pages to present John's theological ideas is primarily descriptive and analytical rather than being an organization of his doctrines into traditional systematic forms. What John calls "mystical theology" does not lend itself to systematization, and, if such an approach were possible, much of the spirit and content of his teachings would be lost, because it would tend to encase his thought in molds which the Mystical Doctor never employed in the development of his doctrine. The present study begins, therefore, with a brief presentation of the

historical and theological context in which John lived, and proceeds to describe the major distinctives of his theology in their empirical order, viz., John's epistemological foundation, his doctrine of infused contemplation, and his experience of union with God. Following this, a theological evaluation is included, which delineates his principal contributions to theological thought and attempts to assess his chief doctrinal emphases for their permanent values in the Christian religion.

Limitations of space have required that this study become more circumscribed than originally intended, and therefore certain aspects of John's theology have not been included in the present corpus to avoid repetition and to give greater analysis to the ideas which are more distinctly Sanjuanist in origin and development. Accordingly, then, the principal doctrines which have been analyzed but not inserted in the present study are the doctrines of God, the Trinity, Christology, Pneumatology, Eschatology, and Ecclesiology. Much of the substance of these studies will be found as part of the theological backdrop for the analysis of John's epistemology and his teachings on contemplation and divine union.

The aim in the study which follows has been to let John of the Cross be heard with as little reference as possible to the writings of other authors of mystical theology. Many works dealing with his

theology include an over-abundance of other authors' materials, and this not only obscures John's teachings, but at times it even distorts his meaning. Citations from John's major treatises are numerous, and in order to avoid interference with non-Johannine ideas, no effort is made to contrast or compare his thought with his contemporaries or predecessors.

Quotations from the works of John are taken from the recent English translation (1963) by Kavanaugh and Rodríguez.<sup>1</sup> This is a very readable English version of John's thought, and where it was felt that a better translation of a particular passage was needed, it was taken from Peers' standard work on St. John<sup>2</sup> or from some other qualified source and duly indicated in a footnote. In the interest of clarity, the author at times gives special note to certain grammatical nuances in John's Spanish and to certain alternate meanings for words which have unique bearing on his theology. The English orthological authority consulted in this study has been Webster's New

---

<sup>1</sup>Kieran Kavanaugh, O. C. D. and Otilio Rodríguez, O. C. D. (translators), The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1966).

<sup>2</sup>E. Allison Peers, The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross (London: Burns and Oates, 1935).

International Dictionary,<sup>1</sup> and the principal Spanish lexical authority has been Cassell's Spanish Dictionary<sup>2</sup> which was edited by E. A. Peers, himself a leading Sanjuanist scholar.

Technical matters of literary and textual criticism relative to John's works have also been omitted from the pages which follow, due to their extensive and laborious nature. None of the original autographs of the Saint's major treatises are extant, so the problem of discovering the original thought of John is at times complicated, due to the mutilation and interpolation which plagued his writings before and after his death. The most thorough analysis to date of the Spanish codices and fragments of John's writings has been done by Lucinio Del SS. Sacramento of Segovia.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, this definitive edition was published in 1964, during the course of the research for the

---

<sup>1</sup>William Allan Neilson, Thomas A. Knott, and Paul W. Carhart, editors, Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, 2nd Edition, Unabridged (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1952).

<sup>2</sup>Edgar Allison Peers, José V. Barragán, Francesco A. Vinyals, and Jorge Arturo Mora, editors, Cassell's Spanish Dictionary (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1966).

<sup>3</sup>Lucinio Del SS. Sacramento, Edición Crítica de las Obras del Doctor Místico, included in: Crisogono de Jesús, O. C. D., Matías del Niño Jesús, O. C. D., and Lucinio Del SS. Sacramento, O. C. D., editors, Vida y Obras de San Juan de la Cruz (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1964).

present study, and it has been the principal Spanish version used throughout. Due attention has been given also to other redactions, and, where these appear to represent more truly the thought of John, indication is made in a footnote.

Few Christian writings have been published which parallel the adverse circumstances under which John of the Cross composed his poetic and expository treatises. Like the Apostle Paul, he wrote during incarceration, and while persecuted in his years of freedom, but his teachings testify to an empirical and intimate knowledge of God which goes far beyond that of ordinary theologies based on discursive and wholly rationalistic modes of thought. It is with the purpose of analyzing descriptively and theologically the spiritual life and experience of this proponent of man's union with God's very Being that this study now turns.

## PART I

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

#### I. General Historical Context

##### Sixteenth Century Spain

The hundred years between 1492 and 1592 represent the most far reaching century of history insofar as today's "western civilization" is concerned. During these ten decades the Moslems were driven from the Spanish mainland, the New World was discovered, the Protestant Reformation was born, the Council of Trent convened, the Spanish Armada defeated, and a wave of giants in many fields marched through men's minds. There were Erasmus, Columbus, Luther, Calvin, Theresa, Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Bacon, Magellan, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Cervantes and many others that vastly changed the thinking and course of world history.

Historians are agreed that the sixteenth century saw Spain at her zenith. Beginning with the expulsion of the Moors and ballooning into the bizarre discovery and exploitation of the Americas in 1492, Spain was considered the wealthiest and most advanced nation of the world. Salamanca, with some 5000 students, temporarily eclipsed the University of Paris in world esteem; Castille rivaled all nations

in having more clerics per capita than any part of the world; and Charles I, grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella, became Charles V, Emperor of Germany and of all the Holy Roman Empire.

During the sixteenth century the Spanish fleets had triumphed from the Gulf of Lepanto to Manilla Bay, and Conquistadores, such as Cortes and Pizarro, had succeeded in overturning the centuries-old empires of the Aztecs and the Incas. Iberian captains explored and settled the coasts of Africa and Asia to such an extent that by the year 1600, Spain controlled the most extensive empire the world had ever seen.

Spain's principal ruler during this century was Phillip II (1527-1598), son of Charles I and great-grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella. By virtue of his paternal relationship, Phillip inherited the crowns of Spain, Naples, the two Sicilies, Milan, the Brabant, Flanders, the Dutch Netherlands, Franche-Comte, and the Spanish Empires in America, Africa, and Asia. During his reign he increased his kingdom to include Portugal, and consolidated the Mediterranean holdings by warring against the Moslems in North Africa and off the coast of Greece, and against the French in Italy. Phillip and his uncle, Ferdinand, who was Holy Roman Emperor, (1556-1564),<sup>1</sup> jointly

---

<sup>1</sup>Ferdinand's son, Phillip's cousin, Maximilian II, held this responsibility from 1564-1576.

dominated the political and economic life of Europe. But what is significant for the present study is that John of the Cross lived at the height of Spain's "Golden Age." Indeed, he helped to make it more golden by his devotion to God and his guidance of those who were willing to follow in a closer experience of God.

### Biographical Highlights

Biographies of St. John of the Cross are almost as numerable as the principal works written about this Carmelite Friar who was declared "Doctor of the Church Universal" by Pope Pius XI in 1926. Many helpful studies of John's life exist in English,<sup>1</sup> though the best official account was written in Spanish on the occasion of the 400th year of his birth by Padre Crisógono de Jesús.<sup>2</sup> This present introduction to the saint's theological distinctiveness will not add to these already copious biographies, but the salient highlights of his life must be reviewed briefly in order to contextualize his literary works and his contribution to Christian theology.

---

<sup>1</sup>E. g., Peers, op. cit.; Crisógono de Jesús, O. C. D., The Life of St. John of the Cross, trans. Kathleen Pond (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958); Fr. Bruno, O. C. D., St. John of the Cross (London: Sheed & Ward, 1932); Kavanaugh and Rodríguez, op. cit.; E. W. Trueman Dicken, The Crucible of Love (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1963); and Bede Frost, Saint John of the Cross (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1937).

<sup>2</sup>Crisógono, op. cit.



Juan de Yepes was born in 1542, just 25 years after Martin Luther nailed his theses to the door at Wittenburg. In no sense, however, could he be considered contemporaneous with the German reformer, since Luther's death occurred early in St. John's childhood. His mother was widowed before he was a year old,<sup>1</sup> and the family<sup>2</sup> left the village of Fontiveros, near Avila, to settle subsequently in the neighboring town of Medina del Campo in central Spain.

John's elementary schooling was realized while in Medina. Here he also worked for a year in a hospital, and from 1559 to 1563, he studied the humanities in a local Jesuit school. Many of his basic theological concepts were formulated during these years but the principal influences on his devotional thought were to come later. In 1563, he declined an offer to be chaplain at the Plague Hospital in Medina and accepted instead the invitation of certain Carmelite friars in the mitigated order to become one of them. His religious name while with the non-reform Carmelites was Juan de San Matías.

---

<sup>1</sup>Frost leaves the death of John's father until the boy was seven years of age. The weight of other biographers is against this view. Frost, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>John of the Cross had two elder brothers, Francisco and Luis, though the latter died while John was still an infant. Francisco later became one of the chief sources of Sanjuanistic biography.

The more formal academic training of friar Juan was procured in his three year course in arts (1564-67) at the world-renowned University of Salamanca. Contiguous with these studies he also took the accustomed theological courses at the Carmelite College of San Andrés in Salamanca and, upon completing them, he received priest's orders and began hearing confessions. But the most far-reaching occurrence of his life during this important year of 1567 was his first encounter with the great Carmelite reformer, St. Theresa of Jesus. This acquaintance was to reshape the religious history of Spain.

The academic year 1567-68 was spent by John in post-graduate theological studies at the University of Salamanca. Upon completion of these advanced classes, the young Carmelite set out to cast his lot with Madre Theresa in what was to be known as the Barefooted (Descalzed) Carmelite Reform. In 1568 he officially aligned himself with this new order, and took the religious name by which he is more commonly known today--"John of the Cross" (Juan de la Cruz).

From the Fall of 1568 until 1577, John was busy assisting St. Theresa in the founding and administration of many of the new reform communities. She was the driving force and planner. He was the theological and practical assistant.

As might be expected, opposition from the Carmelites of the

mitigated, or non-reform, rule set in. According to Lea, John was repeatedly denounced to the Inquisitions of Seville, Toledo, and Valladolid as a possible alumbrado (Illuminist), but these tribunals neither imprisoned him nor censured his writings.<sup>1</sup> They doubtless felt that their time was needed to investigate other writers whose heresy was more apparent, and that the perpetual surveillance of his teachings by the Carmelite groups was sufficient to keep the Teresian Friar orthodox.

But the persecution of the Reform Carmelites was intensified during the decade of 1570-1580. John, as the principal male leader in the reform, seems to have received the brunt of it all. During an imprisonment of nine months in the non-reform monastery of Toledo, he wrote four of his extant poems: "The Spiritual Canticle" (15 or perhaps 31 stanzas), "By the Waters of Babylon," "In the Beginning Was the Word," and "Song of the Soul."<sup>2</sup> Following his escape in 1578, he spent nearly a year as Vicar of the Reform Carmelite house in El Calvario and simultaneously produced other works of significance such as: "The Dark Night," the sayings "Of Light and Love," and the "maxims on Love" and the "Degrees of Perfection."

---

<sup>1</sup>Henry Chas. Lea, Chapters from the Religious History of Spain (Philadelphia: Lea Brothers, 1890), p. 286.

<sup>2</sup>Those are the English titles given the poems by Kavanaugh and Rodríguez, op. cit., pp. 711 ff.

In the brief period of 1579-82, he founded and became the first rector of the descalced (or Reform) Carmelite College at Baeza and probably completed his first commentary entitled The Ascent of Mount Carmel during this rectorship. Following this he spent the next eight years in and around the cities of Granada and Segovia, where he established new religious houses, attended to administrative and priestly responsibilities, and found time to produce the majority of his theological treatises. Thus, he wrote the final stanzas of his doctrinal colloquy The Spiritual Canticle and the commentary which theologially elucidates it. In addition, he finished the commentary on the poem The Dark Night that complements the one entitled The Ascent of Mount Carmel. Also, it was during these years that he wrote the poem The Living Flame of Love and its explicative commentary which represents his most advanced thinking in regard to the theological implications of divine union. Sanjuanist scholars are unanimous in attributing still other brief poems, letters, and minor literary works to this Granada-Segovia period in St. John's career.

The last year of his life was his most difficult. His health was bad, his official influence was suppressed, and he was formally rejected by the ecclesiastical leaders of his own order. In 1591 he suffered a foot infection that did not heal and it led to other physical

complications. His death occurred in December of that year at the monastery of Obeda, Spain.

Clement X beatified John of the Cross less than a century (1675) following his death. He was canonized in 1726, and two hundred years later was declared "Doctor of the Church" by Pius XI.

### Christian Origins in Spain

There remains another context which merits review before the historical backdrop of John of the Cross is complete. It is the religious setting out of which he came, and against which he spent much of his life in reform.

Little is known of how Christianity arrived in Spain. The accounts of a missionary journey there by St. Paul and of a mission to Spain by James (the son of Zebedee) before his death in 43 A.D. are legendary. However, both Irenaeus<sup>1</sup> and Tertullian<sup>2</sup> speak of Christians being in Spain before the end of the second century. Cyprian also sheds some light on the advanced stage of Christianity's

---

<sup>1</sup>Irenaeus, Against Heresies: 1:10:2. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, editors, The Ante Nicene Fathers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), Vol. I, p. 331.

<sup>2</sup>Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, Chap. VII, Roberts and Donaldson, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 158.

development in Spain in the middle of the third century by mentioning the bishops of León-Asturia, Mérida, and Saragossa, and alluding to still others.<sup>1</sup> There is little doubt, then, that Christianity is of ancient origin in Spain.

During the Visigothic years of rulership over the Iberian Peninsula (496-714 A. D. ), Christianity suffered nearly a century (496-587) from a tendency toward Arianism due to the fact that the early Gothic kings favored the Arian form of Christian doctrine. However, by 587 A. D. , King Recared was converted on this matter and officially adopted the tenets of the Church of Rome to be those of the monarchy. The seventh century, then, was the age of triumph for Orthodoxy in Spain, though the nationalistic spirit of the Iberians and the individualistic spirit of the Visigoths made the Spaniards traditionally suspicious of papal authority and supremacy.

#### Islamic Occupation in Spain

The third period in hispanic Christianity is the Arab occupational epoch from 711-1492, during which time the religion of Christ and that of Mohammed endeavored to co-exist in the southern provinces of Spain. Doubtless some efforts were made at accommodation

---

<sup>1</sup>Cyprian, Epistle 67. Roberts and Donaldson, op. cit., Vol. V, pp. 369-372.

of the two theologies, though the only major doctrinal infiltration into Christianity appears to have been an early propagation of Adoptianism by Elipandus of Toledo. This heresy, however, appears to have had no lasting effect on the theological heritage of Spain. There were also problems of a disciplinary and ecclesiastical nature but these, too, were resolved gradually during the reconquest of Southern Spain in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Significantly, the eighth to the twelfth centuries produced scant theological literature in Spain, but during the years of the Islamic expulsion (1200-1500 A. D.), a greater volume of Christian writing was forthcoming, though very little of it represents doctrinal distinctiveness. For the most part, the literature of this period is polemically directed against the inroads of Judaism and Mohammedanism, and defensive with regard to the doctrine of Mary and the saints. Some sermonic works of this period are extant, but do not merit serious consideration for our present purpose due to their practical, instead of theological, nature. However, the fourteenth century produced several doctrinal treatises of minor importance by Carmelite authors<sup>1</sup> as well as by writers in the other regular orders

---

<sup>1</sup>Notably: Guido Terrena, Francis Baco, Juan Ballester, Frances Marti, and Felipe Ribot. E. P. Colbert, "Medieval Spain," New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), XIII, 496-506.

existent in Spain.<sup>1</sup>

### The Inquisition Centuries

The fourth period of Spanish Christianity might be designated "the Restoration Era" for in it a concerted effort was made to purge the Church of all infiltrations of heresy stemming from the years under Moorish influence. These were the years of the Inquisition (1492-1700), the years of St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, of Ignatius Loyola and the beginning of the Jesuits, and the years of intense enforcement of the Council of Trent. In regard to Lutheranism, these were centuries of vigilance, suspicion, and defensiveness. In regard to Judaism, Islamism, and the vestiges of Visigothic syncretism, these are epochs of purgation from their influence, effects, and re-occurrence. With regard to Catholicism itself, it is paradoxically the age of revival and ossification.

The reign of Ferdinand and Isabella (1474-1517) saw the refreshing breeze of the Renaissance as it swept through Spain, and it endured to see also the first deadening effects of the Inquisition. The Moors had contributed to the disunity of the Spanish peoples and,

---

<sup>1</sup>E. g., Raymond Lull of the Franciscans, Dominic Guzman of the Dominicans, Boniface Ferrer of the Carthusians, Bernardo Oliver of the Augustinians, et al.



with the Saracens expelled, Ferdinand and Isabella sought to promote unity in every possible form. One way this could be accomplished was to tolerate only one form of religion. In practice, this meant that Mohammedans and Jews were required to accept the Christian faith, or look elsewhere for a homeland. Thus, thousands left Spain during the sixteenth century, and still more thousands acquiesced externally to Christianity in order to remain on the peninsula. The Inquisition became the instrument by which Church and State joined hands in ferreting out those who were suspected of promoting disunity with regard to the unireligious society that the monarchy sought to enforce. This meant that as Lutheranism began its march across Europe, its advance in Spain was halted abruptly by the already efficient and effective government supported Inquisition. No new counter-reformation needed creation and the monarchy did not require convincing. No country was ever better prepared to suppress the "new" theological ideas of the sixteenth century than was Spain.

Wealth poured into the imperial treasury from the African, Asian, and American colonies and this alleviated the Spanish monarchs from the need of popular support for its program of theological suppression.

The early years were paradoxical, for, at the very time that the Inquisition was being firmly established in Spain, the philosophy of Erasmus was being read and defended in its academic circles.

Perhaps the central leader in this movement was Cardinal Cisneros, who founded the University of Alcalá in 1508.<sup>1</sup> This institution became the most important center of humanism in Spain, and rivaled Salamanca in its renown as a progressive center of learning. And, it is worth observing at this point, that in 1571, John of the Cross was named rector of the Discalced Carmelite College, which was located in Alcalá, quite close to the university. At the university there were chairs of nominalism, Scotism, Thomism, and Erasmus himself was extended an invitation to teach there by Cisneros. Unfortunately, the offer was declined by the Dutch philosopher,<sup>2</sup> but its issuance illustrates how closely Spain came to becoming a part of the mainstream of European thought and culture.

During the reign of Phillip II, which was contemporary with the period of the Theresian and Johannine Reform, the back of Erasmianism was broken in Spain. The predecessor of Phillip, Charles I (Charles V of Germany), sought to follow a conciliatory path between the ideals of Erasmus and the facts of political survival as

---

<sup>1</sup>Interestingly, the first edition of John's works was published in this city in 1618, with strong commendatory paragraphs by the university authorities.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps Erasmus declined the invitation due to the outspoken antipathy of Diego López de Zúñiga, the Spanish *Catedrático* of Alcalá, who was one of the most vocal opponents of the Erasmian edition of the New Testament in Latin.

related to Roman Catholicism's political strength. Perhaps in its beginning stages this policy had possibilities, but with the deluge of Protestantism that swept over so much of Europe from 1517-1556, there could be no middle ground. The Council of Trent in its third stage (1562-63) made this abundantly clear, and, when Phillip took over the Spanish government from his father in 1556, he followed the path of least resistance by lending imperial support to the Inquisition. Alonso states that there developed in Spain during this period a psychosis against the threat of Protestant infiltration which reached its height under Phillip II.

Spain became a kind of fortress and paladin state in the fight against Protestantism. The Inquisition . . . prosecuted anything that indicated connivance with the ideas of Luther and Erasmus: such as Holy Scripture in the vernacular, commentaries on Scripture for the laity, ascetic and mystical writings tainted with illuminism.<sup>1</sup>

In 1559, the king issued an ultimatum prohibiting Spanish students from studying outside the country and, in the same year, Pope Paul IV sent letters to Spain empowering the Inquisition to act against bishops who might be suspected of heretical tendencies.<sup>2</sup> It

---

<sup>1</sup>J. Fernandez-Alonso, "Spain, Modern Era," New Catholic Encyclopedia, op. cit., XIII, 508 f.

<sup>2</sup>Heretofore episcopal officers of the church were beyond Inquisitional jurisdiction.

was now believed that adequate control was assured against the possibility of Protestantism's coming into Spain via its returning students, and sufficient powers were in the hands of the inquisitors to completely discover and suppress Protestant and other threatening ideological outbreaks within the country. It is lamentable indeed, when men cannot feel free to express their thoughts, but it is still more regrettable when this takes place after an awakening experience, such as occurred in Spain during the fifty years following the expulsion of the Moors.

It is apparent, then, that to understand contextually the wave of ascetical mysticism which swept Spain in the sixteenth century it is necessary to bring into proper focus the budding seeds of the Erasmian and Cisnerian spiritual movement on the one hand, and the stringent limitations on theological expression imposed by the Inquisition on the other. Thus, the light of freedom of thought was seen, but its expression could only be symbolized. A vital experience with God was believed possible, but its awareness had to remain mystical. A cure for the arthritic effects of nominalism was in the mortar, but its formula could be communicated only in poetic modes.

No wonder, then, that the age of the Carmelite reform took place contemporaneously with reformation movements in other religious orders, viz the work of Peter of Alcantara (d. 1562) in the Franciscan reform and, the work of Ignatius of Loyola (d. 1556) in

establishing the Society of Jesus. No wonder also that the roll call of Christian mystics in Spain during the inquisitional sixteenth century represents the most significant concentration of these spiritual figures in the history of Christendom.<sup>1</sup> Free theological expression in this period was driven into the catacombs of mysticism where it found God freely revealing Himself as divine wisdom and love.

The lid of free thought was off just long enough during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella to let in the fresh air needed for a quasi reform in Spanish Christianity but during the Inquisition, the cover was replaced tighter than ever and free thought had to be communicated as the "dark night of the soul" rather than in the blatant cry: "The just shall live by faith." This suppressive atmosphere was the theological scenery that surrounded the earlier years of Carmelite reform in Spain.

### The Carmelite Context

The more immediate religious environment of John of the Cross also calls for brief attention. In the biographical summary it

---

<sup>1</sup>Among the Dominicans there was: Luis de Granada (d. 1568); among Franciscans: Alfonso of Madrid (d. 1545), and Francisco de Osuña (d. 1540); among Jesuits: Alfonso Rodríguez (d. 1616), Luis de la Palma (d. 1616), and Luis de la Puente (d. 1624); among the Augustinians: Tomás de Villaneuva (d. 1555), and Luis de León (d. 1591); among the Benedictines: García de Cisneros (d. 1510); et al.

was noted that John's first formal education was received as a child in the Children's School of the Doctrine (Colegio de los Niños de la Doctrina) in Medina del Campo. This was a literacy and catechism school run for small children by Augustinian nuns. Later, as an adolescent, he attended classes at a Jesuit school in Medina while working part-time as a male nurse. Crisógono states that during the time that John was a student in this latter institution, it was "in the full flowering of humanist enthusiasm."<sup>1</sup> Upon completion of this course of study in 1563, instead of becoming a Jesuit or Augustinian, as might have been expected, he sought out the Carmelite Monastery of Santa Ana in Medina del Campo, and asked for the brown habit of that order.<sup>2</sup> Whether his decision to become a Carmelite was based on doctrine, on friendships, or on practical matters is not known. What is certain is that the conviction was not a profound one, for upon the termination of his studies at the University of Salamanca four years later, John is found considering a transfer to the more ascetical

---

<sup>1</sup>Crisógono, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Crisógono indicates that John was wanted by at least seven other orders known to be in Medina. No indication is given, however, of the basis for this assumption. Ibid., p. 22.

Carthusians<sup>1</sup> in order to "hide himself in God."<sup>2</sup>

At this stage in his vocational development his encounter with Theresa of Avila convinced him that he should cast his lot with her in the movement to reform his own Carmelite Order. Apparently he continued with the Mitigated (or Calced) Carmelites another year while completing additional theological studies at Salamanca. On November 28, 1568, Friar Juan de Santo Matias made the move that was the turning point of his life. He took off the Observance habit, and exchanged it for that of the Reform. Thus, he began to live barefooted, as was believed to be the more orthodox dress, and took the new name, Friar Juan de la Cruz.

There is much speculation about why John made this change. An objective presentation of the factors involved is practically impossible to ascertain, since the biographies relating his life are either written through the eyes of his devoted followers in the descalced

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. St. Theresa of Jesus, Book of the Foundations; E. A. Peers, Complete Works of St. Theresa (London: Sheed & Ward, 1957), Vol. III, p. 15; cf. also Jerónimo de San José, Historia de la Vida y Virtudes del Venerable Padre Fray Juan de la Cruz (Madrid: 1641), p. 66. This was not a difficult transfer, since all mendicant Friars were allowed to enter the Carthusian Order "without any preliminary authorization from the Holy See. All that was needed was an agreement between the superiors of both orders." Fr. Bruno, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>According to Tomás Pérez de Molina. Cf. Bruno, op. cit., pp. 57 and 398.

movement,<sup>1</sup> or through the eyes of his devoted adversaries in the non-reform Carmelites' Order.<sup>2</sup> It is certain that some of the principal elements in his decision to forsake the observance order for the Primitive Rule Order were: (1) the dynamic personality of the foundress herself--St. Theresa of Avila; (2) the desire to see enforced the observance of a more eremitic primitive rule in the Carmelite Order;<sup>3</sup> (3) the challenge of molding the foundations of a new movement as weighed against the drudgery of converting something already encrusted with deep traditions; (4) the freedom of expression afforded by a possible leadership position in the new order; (5) the intuitive method in Theresa's mystical inclinations which were more in accord with John's own ideas regarding the mode of faith; and,

---

<sup>1</sup>E. g., Crisogono, op. cit., p. 43; and Edith Stein, The Science of the Cross, trans. Hilda Graef (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>E. g., Otger Steggink, O. C., La Reforma del Carmelo Español (Roma: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1965), p. 337.

<sup>3</sup>This rule was originally drawn up by Cardinal Hugo in 1248 A. D. The mitigated rule which was in popular observance among the Carmelites of Spain at the time of John and Theresa was authorized by Pope Eugenias IV in 1432. In 1471, John Soreth, Prior General of the Carmelites from 1451-1571, issued an order allowing those who wished to live under the Primitive Rule to do so "in specified houses set aside for them." John had obtained permission to observe the primitive rule, even while in the non-reform order, but Theresa's movement gave him opportunity to see its observance made compulsory for his fellow friars.



(6) it is even possible that John had aspirations of becoming a missionary to the New World with the influential and spiritual backing of one so capable as Theresa.<sup>1</sup> It is doubtful, however, that John's transfer from the original order to the Discalced Order was due to any basic theological difference in the two groups except, perhaps, that of epistemology.

What can be said with regard to John's future contributions to theology is that the smaller, less structured, Discalced Order afforded him the environment to put into practice his ever-developing concepts of knowing God intuitively and the unitive effects of such knowledge. While it is true that in later years he was suspected of "illuminism", this charge was never proven, nor was it seriously investigated by the inquisitional authorities. Indeed, history appears to indicate that while "illuminism" was the pretended occasion of his being under suspicion, the real causes were of a more interpersonal nature, and, in some cases, they were related only to the technicalities of hierarchical protocol and ecclesiastical procedure. To

---

<sup>1</sup>That John requested to be sent to Mexico in later years is a fact. Cf. Crisogono, op. cit., p. 276. We also know that in 1566, a Franciscan missionary to the West Indies visited Theresa and told her of the millions of souls perishing for lack of teaching. "The Santa Madre prayed about this and received the message from God: 'Wait a little and thou shalt see great things.'" Foundations, Peers, Works of St. Theresa, op. cit., III, p. 3f. A year later she talked to John about going with her in the new Carmelite movement. It is possible that this idea was involved in their early conversations.

John's credit there was never proven any case of immorality or of premeditated disobedience to authority. His canonization has had the effect of vindicating not only his personal and official life, but also of giving authoritative sanction to his writings and theology.

## II. General Introduction to the Writings of St. John of the Cross

### The Nature of His Literary Works

The literary production of John of the Cross when compared to other doctors of the church at Rome is, as Kavanaugh and Rodríguez point out, not comparable "in volume or in doctrinal variety,"<sup>1</sup> but John's writings denote a depth of human psychology and a quality of God-consciousness that gives him a place of unequalled importance in the history of Christian thought.

Only his three major theological works are of major concern for the purpose of this present study. They are: The Ascent of Mount Carmel--Dark Night,<sup>2</sup> The Spiritual Cantic, and The Living Flame

<sup>1</sup>Kavanaugh, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>The Dark Night of the Soul is considered in this study as a part of The Ascent of Mount Carmel. The basis for this conclusion is the nature and content of the two works. Even Peers reluctantly separates them out of respect for a "Venerable tradition," though in reality this Sanjuanist scholar considers the Dark Night as "a continuation of the Ascent of Mount Carmel, and fulfills the undertakings given in it." Peers, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 315. Even as early as

of Love. Strong unanimity exists regarding the Johannine authorship of these three treatises,<sup>1</sup> and there is very little of theological value in his letters and maxims that is not found expounded in the above works. This is not completely true of John's poems. By every test, they are works of inspired art and, where these metrical articulations best convey the theological teachings of John, they are referred to in this present study, even though their purpose is primarily adorational rather than didactic.

---

Padre Andres de la Encarnacion, who was given in the 18th century the task of collecting and editing John's writings, there was the belief that the five books (the three from the Ascent and two from the Dark Night) are "integral parts of one whole, since they all treat different stages of one spiritual path." Cf. ibid., p. xlii. Dicken adds weight to this conclusion with the theory that the Ascent was first intended to consist of four major sections, and that the Dark Night is the fourth and missing part. Book I of the Dark Night thus becomes an introduction to Book IV of the Ascent according to Dicken's theory. His conclusion is: "Thus we find no substantial disagreement among modern critics as to the inherent thematic unity of the Ascent and the Night, and the latter certainly cannot be rightly interpreted unless it is regarded as an integral part of the former." Dicken, op. cit., p. 222. Kavanaugh and Rodriguez also prefer the unity of the two works and propose that the Dark Night should be inserted at the end of Part 4 (Ascent I, 1,ii), op. cit., p. 57 f. That these two treatises (Ascent and Dark Night) are one work, there can be little doubt. That they were written at different times and under different circumstances also must be acknowledged. 5/i

<sup>1</sup>"The authorship of these major prose works . . . no one has ever attempted to question. . . ." Peers, Complete Works of St. John, op. cit., p. xxvii.

None of the original writings of John have been preserved except some of his letters and a collection of seventy-six maxims on light and love. Even this latter compilation appears incomplete. However, an original diagram called the "Mount of Perfection" which John desired to be placed as a frontispiece for all his doctrinal and devotional treatises, is also still extant.

Most of John's writings, then, have come down to the present day as copies, and this proposes the usual problems of literary, textual and historical criticism. However, the scholarly studies of Padre Silverio de Santa Theresa, C. D., resulted in a completely revised edition of the works of John of the Cross which was published in 1931. E. Allison Peers' prophecy that Silverio's edition would probably be the "standard edition . . . for generations"<sup>1</sup> has been true, but in 1964, a more complete and critical version was completed by Padre Lucinio Del SS. Sacramento. Improvements in the science of textual criticism and the current interest in John's theological approach have made the publication of Lucinio's definitive edition both desirable and necessary.

The dates and places of composition for the major treatises of John of the Cross cannot be detailed in this study. John was so

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. viii.

capable of completely objectifying himself from the historical scene about him that the time and place of his writings are not of major importance. This does not mean that he was a recluse who did not know or have concern about the course of history and the welfare of his fellowman. He cared deeply, but he sought the solution to man's woes in God, rather than through channels of political and social intervention. As has been indicated, scholars are generally agreed that the major portion of his literary production was during the last fourteen years of his life while he was at Calvario, Baeza, and Granada.

The Ascent and Dark Night of the Soul. The first of John's works to be considered is an eight stanza poem with a lengthy commentary divided into five books or sections which deal with the doctrine of Christian perfection in its progressive stages from the soul's self-dependence to its supernatural union with God in faith. The treatise is best divided into the two approaches that John makes toward the purification and perfection of man. The first three books (or sections), traditionally bearing the title of The Ascent of Mount Carmel, deal with the "active night," or what might be summarized as the active aspects of self-denial and purification that the soul undertakes in progressing toward union with God. The last two books (or sections), traditionally entitled Dark Night of the Soul, develop the passive elements of

purification and growth in holiness toward the same unitive experience of God. The five books are complementary to the doctrine and purpose of the Spiritual Canticle.

The Spiritual Canticle. This work is an allegorical poem similar in character to the canonical book entitled Song of Solomon.<sup>1</sup> An extensive commentary by the author accompanies the poem and it serves to elucidate the theological and practical significance of the metrical content. The metaphor used to convey the deep emotional and rational relationship between God and the soul is that of a Bride and Bridegroom. It is beautifully and artistically done and, though the commentary was doubtless written for didactic purposes later, it is an invaluable aid to an understanding of the doctrinal ideas involved in the poetry.

The Living Flame of Love. The briefest of the major treatises of John of the Cross is entitled Living Flame of Love. It contains only

---

<sup>1</sup>There are two redactions of the Spiritual Canticle which have come down to us. They differ with regard to the stanza sequence and number. Also the later redaction of the commentary is more detailed. John of the Cross is believed to be the author of both editions, but the second appears to represent a later attempt on his part to revise and expand the previous work. Only Baruzi, among the principal sanjuanists, throws any doubt on the Johannine authorship of the second redaction. Baruzi also rejects the later revision of the Living Flame of Love, believed by most authorities to be by the hand of John. Cf. the discussion of this matter in ibid., Vol. III, p. 5 and P. Silverio de Santa Theresa (ed.) Obras de San Juan de la Cruz (3rd edition), Burgos: Tipografia de "El Monte Carmelo," 1943, p. xxiii.

four stanzas of verse, but their spiritual and theological quality represent the most sublime and intense experience of God in John's soul. Fortunately, he was prevailed upon to expound the doctrinal and empirical significance of these poetic verses, and therefore there exists his prose commentary on each phrase of the stanzas.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to refrain from eulogy of the beauty and eloquence of this poem in Spanish. Also, the theological scope and content denote an author who unquestionably writes from a height of spiritual communion with God that is rare in the history of mankind.

The Minor Works of John. In addition to these major works of John of the Cross, others of less theological value have been preserved. One is a brief treatise entitled Precautions, and it contains several practical words of advice regarding the Christian's attitude toward the "world", the Devil, and the "flesh".<sup>2</sup> Another minor work

---

<sup>1</sup>As with the Spiritual Cantic, there exist two redactions by John of the commentary on Living Flame of Love. The differences between the two commentaries is only slight. This present study follows the later redaction which appears to be somewhat more detailed and perhaps represents, to some extent, John's maturest thinking.

<sup>2</sup>Contra si mismo y Sagacidad de Su Sensualidad--(Against one's own self and the sagacity of his sensual nature) translated here as "flesh," since it is against this depraved aspect of man's nature that John writes his precautions.

is his Four Counsels for Reaching Perfection, which appears to be a lengthy letter to a theological student or lay brother. In it John summarizes some of his concepts about progressing toward full sanctification. Only one original work of John has survived to our day. It is his Maxims of Love and Light, and contains a prayer and seventy-six sayings supposedly used by John in teaching nuns and friars the significance of these two elements in the Christian life. Other brief fragments of didactic materials<sup>1</sup> and much of John's personal and official correspondence have been preserved, but these are of relatively minor importance for his theological thought.

Of the major publications of John of the Cross, the French Sanjuanista Jean Vilnet, has the following to say: "These four works summarize all of the thought of St. John of the Cross and must of necessity be the basis for any doctrinal, filological, or literary study that might be made of John."<sup>2</sup> They are the basis in this present analysis of John's empirical approach and his doctrinal contributions to Christian theology.

---

<sup>1</sup>E. g., Puntos de Amor, Grados de Perfección, Avisos que Tenia la Madre Magdalena, and Otros Avisos. The penultima collection is incorporated for the most part in the major work: Ascent of Mount Carmel.

<sup>2</sup>Jean Vilnet, La Biblia en la Obra de San Juan de la Cruz (Version de P. Marcellano de Lizaso, O. F. M. Cap.) (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Desclee, de Brouwer, 1953), p. 38.



### His Principal Literary Sources

No literary works endure which do not have some roots reaching deep into the tradition that precedes them. This is not to deny the possibility of inspiration and originality, but it spells out one of the basic factors in genius and creativity. The writings of John of the Cross reveal a thorough knowledge of the Bible, of Patristic and Scholastic theology, and of other outstanding thinkers in Christian history.

The Bible. Like all Biblical expositors of his day, John did not employ the modern methods of hermeneutics in his interpretations of the Scriptures, though he used the Vulgate version extensively to support his teachings. Jean Vilnet reports that there are over 900 Biblical references in John's major works,<sup>1</sup> two-thirds of which are from the Old Testament, and one-third from the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> In the commentaries of John there are Biblical quotations on almost every page. Peers states that "in the mystical interpretation of Holy

---

<sup>1</sup>Including 13 references from Baruch, one from II Maccabeas, six from Tobias, two from Judith, 29 from Wisdom, and 17 from Ecclesiástico. Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

Scripture . . . he (John of the Cross) has had few equals even among his fellow Doctors of the Church Universal."<sup>1</sup>

Of the traditional interpretations of the Bible, i. e., the literal (or historical), the moral, the allegorical, and the spiritual, John employs the latter two methods principally. He is certainly no nominalist, but neither is he given to the abusive extremes of many of the allegorical interpreters of the medieval period. He seeks the deeper spiritual truth behind each passage, and his writings clearly denote the authoritative position that he gives to the Holy Scriptures. While St. John probably did not study Greek and Hebrew in his theological training,<sup>2</sup> he does have a good command of Latin, as indicated by his frequent use of the Vulgate though, at times, the Scriptural quotations in Spanish appear to be his own translation from the Latin. This was probably necessary in many instances, since the publication of the complete Bible in Spanish was on the forbidden list at this time in Spain.<sup>3</sup> His reverence for the Scriptures and his dependence upon

---

<sup>1</sup>Peers, Complete Works, op. cit., p. xxx.

<sup>2</sup>Although Crisogono believes he did study Greek at the Jesuit School in Medina. Cf. Crisogono de Jesus O. C. D., Vida y Obras de San Juan de la Cruz, quinta edicion (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1964), p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>In 1551, the publication and reading of the Bible in the common language was placed on the Catholic Index in Spain. Portions of it could be translated, however, for academic reasons in the publication of "acceptable" theological books and treatises. John of the Cross and

them for knowledge is clearly stated in the Prologue to his principal work where he says: "Being guided by the Scripture we do not err since it is the Holy Spirit that speaks to us through it."<sup>1</sup>

Illustrations of John's devotion to Biblical authority could abound far beyond the confines of this present study, but the following selected examples can serve to indicate his utter freedom in the use of the Bible, and his confidence in the Scriptures as the basis for doctrine. The scriptural quotations are underlined below to emphasize their prevalence and dominance in John's writings.

In discussing the transformation which takes place in the soul due to its union with God, the Mystical Doctor declares that spiritually speaking, there are two kinds of life:<sup>2</sup>

One is beatific, consisting in the vision of God, which must be attained by natural death, as St. Paul says: We know that if this our clay house is dissolved, we have a dwelling place of God in heaven.<sup>3</sup>

---

Professor Luis de León of Salamanca included much of the Bible in Spanish in their lectures and writings. Cf. Vilnet, op. cit., pp. 17 ff.

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, from Crisógono, Vida y Obras, op. cit., p. 364.

<sup>2</sup>Flame, 2, xxxii-xxxvi.

<sup>3</sup>II Corinthians 5:1.

The other is the perfect spiritual life, the possession of God through union of love. This is acquired through complete mortification of all the vices and appetites and of one's own nature. Until this is achieved, one cannot reach the perfection of the spiritual life of union with God; as the Apostle also declares in these words: If you live according to the flesh you shall die; yet if with the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh you shall live.<sup>1</sup>

The soul is unable to live perfectly in this new life, if the old man does not die completely. The Apostle warns: take off the old man and put on the new man who according to God is created in justice and holiness.<sup>2</sup> In this new life, which the soul lives when it has arrived at the perfect union with God, here being discussed, all the inclinations and activity of the appetites and faculties, which of their own were the operation of death and the privation of the spiritual life, become divine.<sup>3</sup>

The soul can well repeat the words of St. Paul: I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me.<sup>4</sup> The death of this soul is changed to the life of God. We can also apply the words of the Apostle, absorpta est mors in victoria [death is swallowed up in victory]<sup>5</sup> as well as those the prophet Osee speaks in the person of God: O death, I will be your death.<sup>6</sup> In other words: Since I am life, being the death of death, death will be absorbed in life.

The soul, then, is absorbed in divine life, withdrawn from its natural appetites and from all that is secular and temporal; it is brought into the king's cellars, where it rejoices in its Beloved, remembering His breasts more than wine, saying: Although I am black, I am beautiful, daughters of Jerusalem,<sup>7</sup> for my natural black color was changed into the beauty of the heavenly king.

---

<sup>1</sup>Romans 8:13, Flame 2, xxxii.

<sup>2</sup>Ephesians 4:22-24.

<sup>3</sup>Flame 2, xxxiii.

<sup>4</sup>Galatians 2:20.

<sup>5</sup>I Corinthians 15:54.

<sup>6</sup>Os. 13:14.

<sup>7</sup>Ct. 1:3-4.

In this state of life so perfect, the soul always walks in festivity, inwardly and outwardly, and it frequently bears on its spiritual tongue a new song of great jubilation in God, a song always new, enfolded in a gladness and love arising from the knowledge the soul has of its happy state. Sometimes it walks in joy and fruition, expressing in its spirit those words of Job: My glory will ever be renewed, and I shall multiply my days as a palm tree.<sup>1</sup> This is equivalent to declaring that God Himself, always remaining the same, renews all things. As the Wise Man states: Being ever one in my glory, I will ever renew my glory,<sup>2</sup> that is, I will not let it grow old as it was before. And I will multiply my days as the palm tree, that is, raise my merits heavenward as the palm tree lifts its branches.

The merits of a person in this state are usually remarkable in number and quality, and ordinarily this person also sings in his spirit all that David proclaims in the Psalm which begins: Exaltabo te, Domine, quoniam suscepisti me, and especially in the last two lines: Convertisti planctum meum in gaudium mihi, etc., conscidisti saccum meum, et circumdesdisti me laetitia, to the end that my glory may sing to you and I may not regret; my Lord, God, I will praise You forever.<sup>3</sup>

There is no need to be amazed that the soul so frequently walks amid this joy, jubilation, fruition, and praise of God. Besides the knowledge it has of the favors received, it feels in this state that God is so solicitous in regaling it with precious, delicate, and enhancing words, and in extolling it by various favors, that He has no one else in the world to favor nor anything else to do, that everything is for the soul alone. With this feeling it proclaims like the bride in the Canticle: Dilectus meus mihi et ego illi.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Job 29:20, 18.

<sup>2</sup>Wis. 7:27.

<sup>3</sup>Psalm 29:2, 12, 13.

<sup>4</sup>Song of Solomon 2:16, Flame 2, xxxv-xxxvi.

The following passage demonstrates John's ability to move freely from the Old to New Testaments in his presentation of his theological ideas. In this paragraph, he employs the Scriptures as a means of supporting the idea that no creature can serve the human intellect as a proximate means of union with God:<sup>1</sup>

God told Moses, who had asked for this clear knowledge, that no one would be able to see Him: No man shall see Me and remain alive.<sup>2</sup> St. John exclaims: No man has ever seen God nor anything like Him.<sup>3</sup> And St. Paul with Isaiah says: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man.<sup>4</sup> This is why Moses, as affirmed in the Acts of the Apostles, dared not look at the bush while God was present, because, in conformity with his feelings about God, he thought his intellect was powerless to look fittingly upon Him.<sup>5</sup> It is told of our Father Elias that on the mount he covered his face (blinded his intellect) in the presence of God.<sup>6</sup> He did this because he did not dare, in his lowliness, to gaze on something so lofty, and he realized that anything he might behold or understand particularly would be far distant from God and most unlike Him.<sup>7</sup>

One other quotation from the Ascent will serve to illustrate not only John's dependence on the inspired writings, but also denotes his exegetical teachings so common to his "mystical theology." He states that:

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 8, iv.

<sup>2</sup>Exodus 33:20.

<sup>3</sup>John 1:18.

<sup>4</sup>I Corinthians 2:9; Isaiah 64:4.

<sup>5</sup>Acts 7:30-32. <sup>6</sup>I Chronicles 19:11-13. <sup>7</sup>Ascent II, 8, iv.

In this mortal life no supernatural knowledge or apprehension can serve as a proximate means for the high union with God through love. Everything the intellect can understand, the will experience, and the imagination picture is most unlike and disproportioned to God, as we have said.

Isaias brought this out admirably in a noteworthy passage: To what have you been able to liken God? Or what image will you fashion like to Him? Will the iron-smith by chance be able to cast a statue? Or will the goldsmith be able to mold Him out of gold, or the silversmith with plates of silver?<sup>1</sup>

The ironsmith signifies the intellect whose work is to form the concept by removing the iron of sensible species and phantasms.

The goldsmith symbolizes the will which is capable of receiving the figure and form of delight caused by the gold of love.

The silversmith, who was unable to fashion Him from plates of silver, typifies both the memory and the imagination. The concepts and images which these powers mold and construct can easily be likened to plates of silver.

It is as if Isaias had said that the intellect will not be able through its ideas to understand anything like God, nor the will experience a delight and sweetness resembling Him, nor the memory place in the phantasy remembrances and images representing Him.

Manifestly, then, none of these ideas can serve the intellect as a proximate means leading to God. In order to draw nearer the divine ray the intellect must advance by unknowing rather than by the desire to know, and by blinding itself and remaining in darkness rather than by opening its eyes.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Isaiah 40:18-19.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 8, v.

In concluding this section on John's use and devotion to the Bible as his chief literary source, it is interesting to note that the scriptural passage most frequently cited by him is the Pauline expression: "Faith cometh by hearing," Romans 10:17.<sup>1</sup> This is the key to his concept of religious epistemology, and is the foundation stone of his entire concept of knowing God out of union with Him. All roads begin with Romans 10:17, in John's theological experience.

Patristic Theology. Another source of literary support on which John relies is selected writings from the patristic period. These are principally from four authors: Augustine, Pseudo-Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Pseudo-Dionysius.

Augustine is the principal influence in his theology, though specific citations are rarely given. He refers to Augustine in only six quotations,<sup>2</sup> and each of these are with the intent of corroborating some theological point he is making. For instance, when John wants to emphasize the moral distinction between man's creatureliness and God, he cites the Soliloquies in support of his view, and then adds: "These are the words of the Saint."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Ascent II, 3, iii; II, 27, iv; III, 31, viii; Cantic 14-15; xv.

<sup>2</sup>Four of these are from Pseudo-Augustine and two from Augustine.

<sup>3</sup>Ascent I, 5, i.



Miserable man that I am, when will my pusillanimity and imperfection be able to conform with your righteousness? You indeed are good, and I, evil; You merciful, and I, wicked; You are holy, and I, miserable; You are just, and I am unjust; You are light, and I, blindness; You are life, and I am death; You are medicine, I am sickness; You are supreme truth, and I, utter vanity.<sup>1</sup>

To add weight to his teaching that self-knowledge is a necessary part of acquiring divine knowledge, the Mystical Doctor quotes again Augustine as saying: "Let me know myself, Lord, and I will know You."<sup>2</sup> In another context he quotes the Bishop of Hippo as in agreement with his idea that suffering is a part of love and can be borne without heaviness. "As St. Augustine says, love makes all burdensome and heavy things nearly nothing."<sup>3</sup>

The other citations he makes from Augustine have to do with God's self-manifestation to the soul,<sup>4</sup> and to other creatures,<sup>5</sup> and of the divine grandeur and excellence that is revealed thereby.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Pseudo-Augustine, Soliloquiorum animae ad Deum liber unus, c. 2: PL 40, 866.

<sup>2</sup>Night I, 12, v, from Augustine, Soliloquiorum, lib. 2, c. 1: PL 32, 885.

<sup>3</sup>Night II, 19, iv; Augustine, Serm. 9, De verbis Domini in Mt.; PL 38, 444.

<sup>4</sup>Canticle 1, vi. Pseudo-Augustine, Soliloquiorum animae ad Deum liber unus, c. 30: PL 40, 888.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 4, i; Pseudo-Augustine, Soliloquiorum animae ad Deum liber unus, c. 31: PL 40, 888.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 5, i; Pseudo-Augustine, Soliloquiorum animae ad Deum liber unus, c. 31: PL 40, 888.

Traces of Augustinian theology can be noted behind much of John's teachings, especially with respect to his trinitarian emphases, his doctrine of man, and his stress on the three theological virtues. The above citations represent the only specific quotations which John attributed to Augustine but in the course of this present study other sanjuanist passages will be cited which indicate a significant indebtedness to the North African's teachings.

There is also an indebtedness to Gregory the Great, though it is more practical than theological. John cites Gregory's interpretation of Acts 2:3 on two occasions,<sup>1</sup> and quotes Gregory in his contention that "faith is without merit when it has proof from human reason."<sup>2</sup> Also, an allusion to Gregory's commentary on St. John is made in the Flame,<sup>3</sup> and in his discussion of supernatural visions, John refers to St. Benedict's vision of the entire world as empirical proof of this type of experience in relation to corporal substances.<sup>4</sup> Beyond these definite instances there appears to be no great dependence

---

<sup>1</sup>Night II, 20, iv, and Flame 2, iii. Gregory, Homil. in Evang.: PL 76, 1220.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent III, 31, viii; Gregory, Hom. 26, in Evang. PL 76, 1197.

<sup>3</sup>Flame 3, xxiii; cf. Gregory, Hom. 30 in Evang., PL 69, 1220.

<sup>4</sup>Ascent II, 24, i; cf. Gregory, Vita S. Benedicti. Dial., lib. 2, c. 35: PL 66, 198.

by John on Gregory's thought, except perhaps in some of his other Biblical interpretations, and even these would be difficult to trace and thoroughly substantiate.

There are four specific references to Dionysius in the works of John, and, interestingly, they are all the same quotation. Thus in each of his major works--The Ascent of Mount Carmel, The Dark Night, The Spiritual Canticle, and The Living Flame of Love--he reiterates the Dionysian definition of contemplation as being "a ray of darkness."<sup>1</sup> The significance of this repetition is noteworthy for two reasons.

In the first place, the idea of contemplation as a ray of darkness is what John considers one of the most distinctive emphases in his own theology. He cites Pseudo-Dionysius on this point as a corroboration of his own viewpoint rather than as his original source for the concept. Basic to an understanding of any of John's theology is his complete confidence in God to give Himself to man to the degree that the human agent intellect and affections are darkened. Contemplation is the process by which God sends this blinding ray of darkness that simultaneously results in His very self-giving to the soul. No

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 8, vi; Night II, 5, iii; Canticle 14-15, xvi; Flame 3, xlix.

other phrase more succinctly captures the essence of St. John's idea of mystical theology than this one of Pseudo-Dionysius.

But the quotation is significant in the second place, because it is the only reference to Dionysius in all of John's works.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, most of his theology represents a calling into question the whole of Western Mysticism which was so deeply indebted to Dionysian thought and claims. In fact, John of the Cross actually dedicates entire chapters of his writings to teach against the popular appeal to supernatural visions, locutionary revelations, and esoteric experiences which found much support in Western theology by reference to the Pseudo-Dionysian writings.<sup>2</sup> He never formally opposes the Dionysian doctrine as such, but he emphatically and repeatedly rejects the popular mysticism of his day which heavily depended on the Pseudo-Areopagite in its theology and practice.

Thus, on the one hand, John uses the Dionysian phrase to epitomize his own theology of human passivity and divine activity in the soul, but at the same time his whole doctrinal system represents

---

<sup>1</sup>The ray of light metaphor in the Ascent might be cited by some as originating with Pseudo-Dionysius, but in John's case it is more probable that he is incorporating here a commonly used illustration from the general mystical tradition current in sixteenth century Spain. Comp. Pseudo-Dionysius, De Mystica Theologia (Chapter one), and Ascent II, 5, vi.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Ascent II, 19, xxxii; III, 7, xiii, et al.

a move away from dependence on Pseudo-Dionysian thought with all its emphasis on supernatural manifestations of God rather than the ontological experience of God alone.

Doubtless there are other theological influences of the Patristic period which found their way into the thinking of John, but they are not readily apparent. One of his remarkable gifts was the ability to incorporate academic and devotional learning into his own experience to such an extent that it became an integral and productive part of himself.

Scholastic Theology. John's education at Medina del Campo and at Salamanca included courses in scholastic theology and his academic relationship with the University of Alcalá while he was rector of the Carmelite College in that city brought him into close contact with the Scholastics of that world-renowned institution. While he does not quote directly from the Schoolmen with great frequency,<sup>1</sup> much of his basic theology denotes the characteristically Aristotelian thought which was so common within Catholic Orthodoxy of that day. It is to his credit, however, that John's Scholasticism was broader than just the current Thomism which enjoyed extreme popularity in Spain during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

---

<sup>1</sup>Only Thomas Aquinas is specifically mentioned.

John's genius for uniting originality with thorough academic training is nowhere more forcibly seen than in the use he makes of his studies in Scholastic theology at Salamanca and elsewhere. The Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy was probably enjoying the height of its grandeur in the universities during the very years that John of the Cross was a student. Its influence in his theology is immense, and its disciplines of thought and massiveness of content were probably the major factors which prevented his system from becoming simply another mystical testimony or an irrational treatise on religious experience.

As is noted above, specific references to the Scholastic theologians are almost negligible in John's writings, but this is partially explainable by the fact that much of his major works was composed while he was incarcerated at Granada. Witnesses to his existence during this period testify that the only books available to him were the Breviary and the Bible.<sup>1</sup> This fact not only explains the abundance of Biblical quotations by John, but it also indicates why his references to scholasticism are usually introduced by some more vague expression, such as: "the philosophers say," or "philosophy states," or, simply, "the philosopher."

---

<sup>1</sup>E. g., note the quotation from Fray Juan Evangelista en Crisogono de Jesús, The Life of St. John of the Cross, op. cit., p. 226.

The most specific reference John makes to St. Thomas's works is from a treatise entitled De Beatitudine. This was subsequently proven not to be an authentic work of Aquinas, and the content of the quotation is of relatively minor importance in John's theology.<sup>1</sup> The one other definite reference which the Doctor makes to St. Thomas is a general statement regarding "secret wisdom" which Aquinas states is "communicated and infused into the soul through love."<sup>2</sup> The Angelic Doctor's interpretation of the source for St. Benedict's world vision is alluded to by John, but beyond these somewhat minor acknowledgments of the Thomistic writings, John makes no others.<sup>3</sup> However, his frequent mention of "good philosophy" and "the philosophers" is almost always a reference to Aristotelian philosophy as it was Christianized through Aquinas or some other medieval text book of his times.

As an illustration of his reliance on Thomistic philosophy, John's view of God's relation to nature can be cited. In discussing the effects of divinely infused contemplation on the memory, he teaches a suspension of the soul's remembering faculties to permit a completely

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 38, iv.

<sup>2</sup>Night II, 17, ii.

<sup>3</sup>Ascent II, 24, i.

passive status for God's activity in the soul. Allaying any doubts about his own view of the divine role in this discipline, John states that though some say that "God does not destroy but perfects nature," he holds the view that in perfecting the memory, God actually allows the loss of distinct knowledge in order to infill the memory with something new and better.<sup>1</sup> John is here clearly resisting the Thomistic teaching that nothing of nature can be lost but is only perfected.<sup>2</sup>

The influence of St. Thomas in John's theology needs further attention, however, as possibly the principal theological system which John sought to correct and improve. This is especially true of Aquinas' emphasis on man's agent intellect and discursive reason. His objection to the Thomistic confidence in man's reasoning powers is twofold. First, John of the Cross not only teaches that a knowledge of God out of His Being is impossible by the use of discursive reason and the agent intellect, but he declares that this intellectual activity and this human faculty can be the very impediments which prohibit the self-revelation of God to man. The divine cognition which John so ardently wants to share with others is not a secondarily derived

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 2, vii.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Aquinas, Summa Theol. 1 q 1.8 ad 2, & q 2.2 ad 1 and 2.2, q 188.8.



knowledge, nor can it be. Its communication rests in the sovereignty of God, since it is the very Being of God that is known. Therefore any confidence in man's agent intellect as a means to deduce a knowledge of God is sheer arrogance for the Mystical Doctor.

There is a second important reason why John of the Cross rejects Thomistic epistemology with regard to the agent intellect and discursive reasoning. It is that these faculties tend to shape, form, and qualify whatever enters one's experience through the passive intellect. They engage in objectifying thought and for John of the Cross, this leads inevitably to distortion of God's self-revelation. Where the human reaction to God's presence in the soul should be one of passive reception and pure adoration, the active intellect invariably elaborates the experience into structures and patterns of man's own molding. For this reason, John seeks to correct the Thomistic emphasis on discursive reasoning and replace it with his doctrine of passive assent and reception of what God reveals of Himself in its own objectivity and untouched purity. Thus God is the Agent in divine knowledge, according to John of the Cross, and man's intellect is only the obedient receptacle and privileged faculty to experience it. This fundamental distinction between the Thomistic epistemology and that of John is probably the most significant relation between the two theologians. John of the Cross would not allow his experience of God to be poured into an a priori mold, Aristotelian or otherwise.

The Aristotelian ideas through St. Thomas and other philosophical concepts are used by John, however, whenever they confirm his own a posteriori experience of God. He makes some twenty general references to "philosophy," "the holy doctors," or "the Philosopher" throughout his writings. Thus, though he teaches against the effectiveness of the human intellect as a means for divine knowledge, he nonetheless is not above using those whose fame is intellectual to corroborate his own ideas in theology.

In support of his contention that only contemplation can lead to a knowledge of God, he recalls a "philosophical axiom" which says that "all means must be proportionate to the end."<sup>1</sup> After this he cites Pseudo-Dionysius, Baruch, Aristotle, and Paul all in one paragraph to sustain his idea that contemplation necessarily involves a darkening of the intellect as it progresses closer to the loftier experience of God.<sup>2</sup>

Twice he appeals to the "philosophers" for verification of his reference to man's "possible" or "passive" intellect,<sup>3</sup> and twice also

---

<sup>1</sup> Ascent II, 8, ii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., II, 8, vi.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., II, 32, iv; and Canticle 14 & 15, xiv.

he quotes the philosophers as saying: "The doctrine for one thing serves also for its contrary."<sup>1</sup> Numerous other references are made to philosophy, but there is one very significant quotation which is basic to his own thinking, and yet it poses serious problems to his whole theological thought.

In The Dark Night and again in The Living Flame of Love, John cites "the philosophers" as saying: "whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver."<sup>2</sup> In many respects, John's incorporation of this axiom into his theology represents a disparity with much of his previous thought, for if this statement is true, then the dominance of man's active reason is a greater factor in the reception of divine revelation than John's theology allows. Indeed, according to him, the mode of the receiver in man's case would not only be an obstacle to the entrance of God's truth, but it would actively break down and eliminate everything which transcends or conflicts with it as a standard of what is reasonable.

John deals with these problems by his doctrine of divine accommodation on the one hand, and by his teachings regarding man's

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent III, 6, 1; and Flame 1, xxii. Cf. also Night I, 12, v; and Canticle 11, xi.

<sup>2</sup>Night I, 4, ii; and Flame 3, xxxiv.



transformation on the other. But the weakness being noted at this present juncture is that he relies on a philosophical source which in fact tends to contradict the main thrust of his whole theological emphasis.

The indebtedness of John to Patristic and Scholastic theologians is greater than can be indicated within the limits of a study which pertains to his theology in general. Some related studies on the Saint's literary sources seek to prove the supremacy of Thomism in his writings,<sup>1</sup> while others seek to give a broader literary heritage to John's theological sources.<sup>2</sup> Frost finds traces of Albert the Great in John of the Cross,<sup>3</sup> but none of his biographers and commentators recognize sufficiently his kinship to the thinking of still another of the great Schoolmen. This is Duns Scotus, and the dual fact that John studied in schools where there were outstanding chairs of Scotistic theology and that there are strong epistemological similarities between Scotus and St. John would indicate that this influence in his doctrine has been neglected too long by his biographers.

---

<sup>1</sup>E. g., Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Christian Perfection and Contemplation (London: Herder, 1937), and Jacques Maritain, The Degrees of Knowledge (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1938), pp. 382-473.

<sup>2</sup>Crisógono de Jesús, O. C. D., San Juan de la Cruz, Su Obra Científica y Su Obra Literaria (Avila, 1929).

<sup>3</sup>Frost, op. cit., pp. 53, 29, 357.

The principal contribution of the Scotus classes to John's theology is seen in his most basic doctrine--that of the intuitive element in divine knowledge and the activity of God in communicating this knowledge. In his study of Augustinian theology John was taught that man attains knowledge through divine illumination of his intellect, whereas in his Thomistic classes, he learned that man receives knowledge indirectly by an abstractive process through the sense-experience of universals as these are related to singulars. From the lectures in Scotistic theology John was given to understand that God confers upon things an innate intelligibility which can be apprehended directly, without any mediatory universals. In other words, given man's rational nature and a basic intelligibility in things themselves, Duns Scotus deduced that an intuitive knowledge of things in their very existence is a possibility.

Hence, in union with the ideas of Scotus, John rejected in his works both the abstractive epistemology of Thomas Aquinas and the illumination theory of knowledge of Augustine. The working out of this Scotistic epistemology in the realm of man's experience of God is one of John's major contributions to the field of Christian theology. His debt to Duns Scotus is perhaps greater than to any other of the Scholastics, and is an element of his system which will subsequently be examined in more detail in this present study.

Other Influences. While the Bible, Augustine, and Duns Scotus appear to be the chief influences in the basic doctrinal approach of John of the Cross, there are suggestions of other significant sources which perhaps exercised a secondary role in the formulation of his thought. They are worth mentioning, but to trace specific points of reference is not completely possible or necessary for this introductory study to his works.

Crisógono, John's official biographer for the 400th Anniversary of his birth, sees as important the Averristic influence at Salamanca during the years of the Saint's studies there. In essence this concept was a Christianized version of the commentaries on Aristotelianism written by the Moorish philosopher, Averroes (1126-1198) of Spain. His importance in the West would be slight except for his popularity among the Parisian Scholastics during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. John Baconthorpe (d. 1346) was the champion of Averroism among his own Carmelite order, and Crisógono notes that his writings were so popular among his fellow friars that the Carmelite Constitutions were eventually modified to prescribe that the teachings of Baconthorpe should be "promoted and defended."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Crisógono, Life of St. John, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

Just how greatly these Averroistic teachings figure in the theology of John of the Cross is open for question though it is quite possible that he may have been indebted to Baconthorpe in his concept of man's dependence upon the Scriptures for his knowledge of God, as over against the more speculative ens divinum concept of abstract theology.

In the matter of epistemology, John seems to follow more directly the lines laid down by Duns Scotus than those of Baconthorpe. It would appear, also, that Baconthorpe himself owed somewhat of a debt to his near contemporary, Scotus.<sup>1</sup> Both men studied in Paris, and it is not impossible that each of them was influenced by the so-called "Averroist Principles" taught in the University of Paris during the fourteenth century. Both of them opposed the anti-voluntarism of Godfrey of Fontaines, who taught the complete passivity of the will. They also are at one in their denial of various doctrines propounded by Henry of Ghent, such as the absolute unity of being in man resulting from the duality of forms, corporeal and intellectual. And it is known that following 1302, Scotus was a lecturer in Paris, so it is conceivable that Baconthorpe could have studied under him or under one of his immediate disciples.

---

<sup>1</sup>Scotus--1265-1308; Baconthorpe, d. 1346.

Whether John of the Cross received his Scotus-Baconthorpe ideas principally in the University of Salamanca classroom or in the Carmelite College lectures, or in both, is not of great importance for the present study. The relationship of their teaching and his views regarding epistemology, the activity of the will, and the anatomy of being is significant, however, and it is quite probable that John of the Cross mastered the theological systems of both men.

In addition to Baconthorpe and Scotus, other contributors of the Catholic tradition can be noted as forming a part of John's basic doctrine. He mentions specifically such writers as Bonaventure, Boethius, and John Cassian. Interestingly, he does not quote Theresa in his writings, and, at first notice, this appears strange. Dicken goes to some length to show various distinctions in the theological concepts of the two contemporaneous Carmelites<sup>1</sup> and he endeavors to prove that they did not mutually borrow or collaborate in their writings. If there were a theological dependency between John and Theresa, it is more probable that, doctrinally speaking, the Carmelite foundress was more greatly influenced by John than vice versa. She even writes to this effect: "He [John of the Cross] was so good a man that I, at least, could have learned much more from him than he from me."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Dicken, op. cit., pp. 270 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Peers, Works of St. Theresa, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 64.



There is evidence also that, when John endeavors to relate a specific Christian doctrine to his experience, he draws more heavily on general Christian tradition for his interpretation. This can be noted in much of his theology, especially with relation to his teachings regarding Christology, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity. Here can be seen in the background the Victorine and Augustinian concepts though they are not so pronounced that specific quotations and ideas are cited. For the most part, John remains in the orthodox center of tradition rather than inclining to any one particular theological school for his doctrines of God and man.

Still other distinctively mystical influences are advocated for the background of John's theology. Just as Frost claims to find doctrinal rootage in Albert the Great,<sup>1</sup> Crisogono sees parallels to Suso and Tauler,<sup>2</sup> Peers builds a case for a relationship to Ruysbroeck,<sup>3</sup> and others see traces of various medieval writers.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Frost, op. cit., pp. 53, 29, 357.

<sup>2</sup>Crisogono, op. cit., p. 51. Crisogono's extravagant conclusions are exceeded only by the meagerness of his evidence when he says: "The history of mysticism knows of no two mystics who resemble one another more closely [than John of the Cross and Tauler]."

<sup>3</sup>Peers, Works of St. John, op. cit., p. xxxiv.

<sup>4</sup>E. g., A Benedictine of Stanbrook Abbey, Medieval Mystical Tradition and Saint John of the Cross (London: Burns & Oates, 1954), p. 151.

While the influence of these earlier mystics cannot be denied categorically, neither can it be convincingly proven, for John's mysticism is more scriptural and empirical in origin, more theological in content, and more thorough in its presentation than any of them.

John of the Cross is primarily an interpreter of his own experience of God more than a systematic assessor of the current theological trends of his day. He is an analyst of his personal knowledge of God more than a commentator on the philosophies of others. He neither copies nor seeks to originate. He only testifies to his experience of God through the Word. Without a doubt his testimony, his analyses, and his empirical interpretation is accomplished in the terminology and on the basis of previous study and before the backdrop of all his prior learning. But the expression of all this in his writings had become so much a part of his being that he is hardly conscious of its origin, and he is much less concerned to systematize it all. His claim to originality, then, is not based so much on the newness of his ideas as it is founded on the freshness of his approach to the cognition of God and his complete freedom in expressing it through Baroque Spanish poetry, coupled with his prose interpretation of it all through commentaries. To his credit, he could do all this without the necessity of becoming overly involved in the academics of theology and philosophy per se. He wrote, not to prove the logic and precision of

previous training, but to share his experience of God with others. He was appreciated because others believed in his experience and were confident that theirs could be a similar one if they climbed the heights of intellectual humility and plumbed the depths of religious abnegation with John.

## PART II

### ANALYSIS OF THE THEOLOGICAL APPROACH OF JOHN OF THE CROSS

#### I. The Epistemological Basis of John's Theology

Basic to any theological system is the author's concept of epistemology and the proportionate means proposed for apprehending truth and communicating it. How does one who testifies of a knowledge of God arrive at such knowledge, what is its nature, and what are the limitations involved in acquiring it? How can it be validated and communicated? These questions are fundamental to all theologians, but John of the Cross claims not only to know God out of His very Being, but also to be bound to Him in a reciprocal union of love that maintains the immensity and sovereignty of God's Being on the divine side and the creatureliness and personal dignity of man on the human side.

#### The Medieval Epistemological Modes

<sup>nie</sup>  
Plato-Augustinian. To appreciate fully John's contribution at this point, it is necessary to contextualize his teachings with the leading epistemological concepts of his day. There were three leading theories of the knowledge process taught in the universities of the sixteenth century. John of the Cross probably was exposed to all of

them. One was the Platonic-Augustinian idea which attributed the activity of understanding to man's reason, and maintained that divine light resides in every soul and makes illumination of supernatural truths possible.

Fortunately, Augustine appears to have abandoned in his later works the Platonic idea of universal natural knowledge in man from a pre-mundane existence which becomes latent when mind and body are joined but can be recalled by "reminiscence". In practice, however, Augustine's own epistemology is but an improvement on Plato's theory.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, he teaches a knowledge of eternal truths which is not the result of a residual deposit left in the soul by some previous existence, but which is the work of continuous discovery by the mind with the aid of an intellectual illumination which is always present in it as its means of contact with the world of intelligible reality. The Bishop of Hippo even speaks of this divine light in the mind as reason's actual participation in the Word of God and as God's inner presence in the mind.<sup>2</sup> Thus what Plato called "reminiscence" is elevated to "divine illumination" by Augustine, and what Plato defined as formerly possessed

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Plato, De Quant. an. 20:34 (P.L. 32 1054-5); and Augustine, Sol. II 20:35 (P. L. 32 902-4); and De Trin. XII 15:24 (P.L. 42 1011-12).

<sup>2</sup>De Trin XII 15:24 (P. L. 42 1011-12).

but presently forgotten knowledge is the notio impressa of blessedness and wisdom in Augustine.<sup>1</sup> The content of this divine illumination is both conceptual and directional. It is the knowledge of "inviolable truth" which man does not otherwise acquire, and it is also the "pattern which governs our being and activities."<sup>2</sup> This, in briefest summary, was one of the principal theories of epistemology studied by John of the Cross during his years of theological training.

Aristotelian-Thomistic. A second theory of human understanding which was taught during John's student days was the Aristotelian-Thomistic concept in which the basic ideas are metaphysical. Man's knowledge is a movement from potentiality to actuality (quidquid movetur ab alio movetur), and every act of understanding becomes a fact within the order of things that are intelligible (genere intelligibilium). This concept of epistemology has been called the Doctrine of Abstraction, since it contends that a thing is apprehended not in itself but through abstraction from its existence, or through the species abstraction from another thing. It is not with immediate experience that the Thomistic concept deals, but with ideas detached from experience and to each other in a logical sequence by use

---

<sup>1</sup>De Lib. Arb. II 9. 26 (P. L. 32 1254-5).

<sup>2</sup>De Trin. IX 6. 9 (P. L. 42. 966); and ibid., IX 7:12 (P. L. 42:967).

of human reason. The result of this Aristotelian concept for theology was to bring about a union of faith and reason and a logical accord between revealed and natural theology. However, its epistemological usefulness was somewhat short-lived, for when the arguments of William of Occam were circulated, the cleavage between faith and reason tended to recur.

The similarity between the gnosfology of Thomas Aquinas and that of Augustine is seen in the sovereignty they both give to human intellect as over against other faculties of man's nature, such as the will, the memory, etc. Each of them stresses the role of human understanding as a necessary preparation for faith, and even as the proper interpreter and analyst of faith. But the two theologians differ in the confidence they place in man's intellect as a source of divine truth. Whereas the Bishop of Hippo resorts to the idea of special illumination of the mind which comes from within man in his creaturely attachment to the Creator, the Doctor Angelicus places greater trust in the intellectus agens of man. He can explicitly state that man's soul "reaches the understanding of truth discursively and by a process of reasoning,"<sup>1</sup> and in opposing the ideas of Plato, he says that human intellectual activity "is not caused by the sole influence of some higher being."--

---

<sup>1</sup>Summa Theologica, Ia lxxix. 4.

but there exists within man "a spiritual ability called by Aristotle the intellectus agens."<sup>1</sup> Aquinas does not deny the role of divine inspiration in matters of revelation, but he consistently assigns to man's reason the responsibility to make what is revealed understandable and to confirm it by rational logic.<sup>2</sup> This epistemology was another academic subject taught in the universities where John of the Cross was a student.

Duns Scotus. The third concept of knowledge acquisition that gained adherents in the sixteenth century was the intuitive apprehension idea of Duns Scotus. He expressly rejected the divine illumination concept of Augustine, and made the abstractive doctrine of Aquinas secondary in the knowing experience.

For Scotus, then, the primary aspect of human understanding is intuitive apprehension. Thus, a thing is known in itself as something intelligible per se and in accordance with its own rational mode of being. The intelligibility of an object is not conferred upon it by some special divine light which moves the intellect to comprehend it, as Augustine insisted, but intelligibility is native to its essence or

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., la lxxix. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., la lxxviii. 1.



nature by virtue of the knowledge that God has of it (omnia intelligibilia actu intellectus divini habent esse intelligibile).<sup>1</sup> The divine knowledge of things endues them with a natural intelligibility which makes it possible for the human intellect to apprehend them directly and to be able to form rational ideas (abstractive knowledge) from them.

John of the Cross Related to These Theories. Of these three methods of cognition it can be said that John of the Cross is more akin to Duns Scotus. There is an apparent indebtedness in his theology to the logic of Aquinas and to the basic tenets of the Augustinian doctrines of man and sin, but, in his epistemology, John inclines more toward the subtle Doctor from Scotland. Attempts have been made to engraft the Carmelite's theology into Thomistic Scholasticism,<sup>2</sup> and Crisogono finds many fruits of Augustinianism in his works,<sup>3</sup> but John is distinctive from both of these systems in that his cognitive modes for the unitive knowledge of God which he teaches are neither illuminative nor

---

<sup>1</sup>Duns Scotus, Ordinatio (Oxford Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard), ed. and trans. Allan Wolter, O. F. M. ("The Nelson Philosophical Texts") (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>E. g., Garrigou-Lagrange, op. cit., and Maritain, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Crisogono, op. cit.

abstractive in nature. There are similarities, however, between John's ideas of epistemology and those of Duns Scotus.

### The Basic Role of Intuition in John's Epistemology

Intuitive Cognition of Being. Accordingly, then, there are two aspects of the Scotus doctrine of knowledge which are especially relevant for the study of John of the Cross. One is that the object of human understanding is not the essence or nature of the object abstracted from its existence, but is the being or essence in itself. This is true whether the object of the intellect is material or spiritual, personal or impersonal, sensible or supra-sensible. However, this does not mean that the abstractive processes are unnecessary. They are indispensable as the means by which the sensory and mental impressions of intuitive knowledge are organized and correlated into complete and orderly conceptions. This is not because the objects of our knowledge are imperfect in themselves, but because we, as the knowers, are limited and incomplete due to the natural imperfections in the human race.

So, if being is the primary object of human intellect, it follows that man's knowledge is not limited to that which is grasped only by the senses, but it is free to apprehend being beyond the material. Here Scotus treads with caution, due to man's moral and

spiritual deficiencies and due, in part, to man's punishment for original sin. No proper understanding is possible of the epistemological emphases of John of the Cross unless it is clearly comprehended that the object of human intellect in his theology is not things, nor ideas, nor mental images, but it is first and foremost the Divine Being out of Himself. Thus in describing the cognition of God, John says:

This sublime knowledge can be received only by a person who has arrived at union with God, for it is itself that very union. It consists in a certain touch of the divinity produced in the soul, and thus it is God Himself who is experienced and tasted there. Although the touch of knowledge and delight that penetrates the substance of the soul is not manifest and clear, as in glory, it is so sublime and lofty that the devil is unable to meddle, nor produce anything similar (for there is no experience similar or comparable to it), nor infuse a savor and delight like it. This knowledge savors of the divine essence and of eternal life, and the devil cannot counterfeit anything so lofty. . . .

A man is incapable of reaching this sublime knowledge through any comparison or imagining of his own, because it transcends what is naturally attainable. Thus God effects in the soul what it is incapable of acquiring. . . .

Since this knowledge is imparted to the soul suddenly, without exercise of free will, a person does not have to be concerned about desiring it or not. He should simply remain humble and resigned about it, for God will do His work at the time and in the manner He wishes. . . .

. . . God's demands for granting such a grace are humility, suffering for love of Him, and resignation as to all recompense. God does not bestow these favors on a possessive soul, since He gives them out of a very special love for the recipient. For the individual receiving them is one who loves God with

great detachment. The Son of God meant this when He stated: Qui autem diligit me, diligetur a Patre meo, et ego diligam eum, et manifestabo ei me ipsum (Anyone who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him). [Jn. 14:21] This manifestation includes the knowledge and touches which God imparts to a person who has reached Him and truly loves Him.<sup>1</sup>

The theological significance of the above description for the present purpose is the emphasis John places on the empirical relation of the soul with Divine Being. The experience is not one acquired by discursive reasoning on man's part, nor is it even a cooperative venture realized by the joint efforts of man and God. The Mystical Doctor's testimony is that the true knowledge of God out of His Very Being comes only as the result of the agential work of God in self-giving. The "touch of God" in John's theology<sup>2</sup> is none other than a hearing of God who is "Infinite Voice." Thus, "it is God Himself who communicates Himself by producing this [infinite] voice in the soul. But He limits Himself in each soul, measuring out the voice of power according to the soul's capacity. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

In still another context, John identifies the "touch of God" with the Logos, or Word of God.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 26, v, viii, ix.

<sup>2</sup>John's term "the touch of God" is analyzed in greater detail in this study under the section on "Empirical Verification."

<sup>3</sup>Canticle 14-15, xi.

How do You, the Word, the Son of God, touch mildly and gently, since You are so awesome and mighty? Oh, happy is the soul that You, being terrible and strong, gently and lightly touch! Proclaim this to the world! But You are unwilling to proclaim this to the world because it does not know of a mild breeze and will not experience You, for it can neither receive nor see You. [Jn. 14:17] But they, O my God and my life, will see and experience Your mild touch, who withdraw from the world and become mild, bringing the mild into harmony with the mild, thus enabling themselves to experience and enjoy You. You touch them the more gently the more You dwell permanently hidden within them, for the substance of their soul is now refined, cleaned, and purified, withdrawn from every creature and every touch and trace of creature. As a result, You hide them in the secret of Your face, which is the Word, from the disturbance of men. [Ps. 30:21]

O, then again, repeatedly delicate touch, so much the stronger and mightier the more You are delicate, since You detach and withdraw the soul from all the other touches of created things by the might of Your delicacy, and reserve it for and unite it to Yourself alone, so mild an effect do You leave in the soul that every other touch of all things both high and low seems coarse and spurious. It displeases the soul to look at these things, and to deal with them is a heavy pain and torment to it.

It should be known that the breadth and capacity of an object corresponds to its refinement and that the more diffuse and communicative it is the more it is subtle and delicate. The Word is immensely subtle and delicate, for He is the touch which comes into contact with the soul. The soul is the vessel having breadth and capacity because of its remarkable purity and refinement in this state.<sup>1</sup>

The divine "touches" are also identified by John with the unctions and anointing activity of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> But the principal

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame, 2, xvii-xviii-xix.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. ibid., 3, xxvi--lxvii.

idea in all these passages is the fact that God alone is the Agent in this revelational activity, and man's apprehension of it is intuitional in mode and ontological in content. Thus John can say of the experience:

. . . it is God who . . . is the Agent, and the soul is the receiver. The soul conducts itself only as the receiver and as one in whom something is being done; God is the Giver and the one Who works in it, by according spiritual goods in contemplation (which is knowledge and love together, that is, loving knowledge), without the soul's natural acts and discursive reflections, for it can no longer engage in these acts as before. <sup>1</sup>

. . . the principal Agent . . . is God, Who secretly and quietly inserts in the soul loving wisdom and knowledge, without specified acts; although sometimes He makes specific ones in the soul for a certain length of time. Thus the individual also should proceed only with a loving attention to God, without making specific acts. He should conduct himself passively, as we have said, without efforts of his own, but with the simple, loving awareness, as a person who opens his eyes with loving attention.

Since God . . . as the Giver communes with him through a simple, loving knowledge, the individual also, as the receiver, communes with God, through a simple and loving knowledge or attention, so that knowledge is thus joined with knowledge and love with love. The receiver should act according to the mode of what is received, and not otherwise, in order to receive and keep it in the way it is given. For as the philosophers say: Whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver. <sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3, xxxii. (Author's underlining.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3, xxxiii-xxxiv. (Author's underlining.)

In contemplation the activity of the senses and of discursive reflection terminates, and God alone is the Agent and one Who then speaks secretly to the solitary and silent soul.<sup>1</sup>

There is as much difference between what the soul does itself and what it receives from God as there is between a human work and a divine work, between the natural and the supernatural. In the one, God works supernaturally in the soul, and in the other, the soul only works naturally.<sup>2</sup>

A person should take note that even though he does not seem to be making any progress in this quietude or doing anything, he is advancing much faster than if he were treading along on foot, for God is carrying him. Although he is walking at God's pace, he does not feel this pace. Even though he does no work with his faculties, he achieves much more than if he did, for God is the Agent.<sup>3</sup>

A proper understanding of John's epistemology, which is extremely basic to his whole theological thought, requires a comprehension of the relationship which John conceives between Creator-God, the Agent in divine knowledge, and created man, the receiver of this revelation. For the Carmelite saint, God is present in His own Being to all of mankind, and He sustains the totality of man's creaturely existence by this continuous act. But this divine presence is realized in three different modes or degrees according to John:

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3, xxiv. (Author's underlining.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3, xlv. (Author's underlining.)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 3, lxvii. (Author's underlining.)

The first is his presence by essence. In this way He is present not only in the holiest souls, but also in sinners and in all other creatures. For with this presence He gives them life and being. Should this essential presence be lacking to them, they would all be annihilated. Thus this presence is never wanting to the soul.

The second is His presence by grace, in which He abides in the soul, pleased and satisfied with it. Not all have this presence of God; those who fall into mortal sin lose it. The soul cannot know naturally if it has this presence.

The third is His presence by spiritual affection, for God usually grants His spiritual presence to devout souls in many ways, by which He refreshes, delights, and gladdens them.

Yet, these many kinds of spiritual presence, just as the others, are all hidden, for in them God does not reveal Himself as He is, since the conditions of this life will not allow such a manifestation. . . .

Since it is certain that at least in the first way God is ever present in the soul, she does not ask Him to be present in her, but that He so reveal His hidden presence, whether natural, spiritual, or affective, that she may be able to see Him in His divine being and beauty. As he gives the soul natural being through His essential presence, and perfects her through His presence by grace, she begs Him to glorify her also with His manifest glory.<sup>1</sup>

A significant distinction is in order at this point regarding the Being of God and the being of man in John's concept of the intuition of God. He clearly points out that the two are infinitely different in that there is no proportion or likeness between them.

It is noteworthy that among all creatures both superior and inferior none bears a likeness to God's being or unites proximately

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 11, iii.



with Him. Though truly, as theologians say, all creatures carry with them a certain relationship to God and a trace of Him (greater or less according to the perfection of their being), yet God has no relation or essential likeness to them. Rather the difference which lies between His divine being and their being is infinite. Consequently, intellectual comprehension of God through heavenly or earthly creatures is impossible, since there is no proportion of likeness.<sup>1</sup>

Since this is true, it follows that of his own making, man is incapable of apprehending God and the necessity for mystical or unhumanly-acquired knowledge of God ensues. If God is to be known by man, He must be known through Himself.

In this mortal life no supernatural knowledge or apprehension can serve as a proximate means for the high union with God through love. Everything the intellect can understand, the will experience, and the imagination picture is most unlike and disproportioned to God. . . .

. . . none of these ideas [of the intellect or imagination] can serve . . . as a proximate means leading to God. In order to draw nearer the divine ray the intellect must advance by unknowing rather than by the desire to know, and by blinding itself and remaining in darkness rather than by opening its eyes.

Contemplation, consequently, by which the intellect has a higher knowledge of God, is called mystical theology, meaning the secret wisdom of God. For this wisdom is secret to the very intellect that receives it.<sup>2</sup>

Intuitive knowledge in John's theology, then, is not some special sixth sense that man can develop and still less is it some

---

<sup>1</sup> Ascent II, 8, iii; cf. also ibid., iv-vi.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., v and vi.

special inspiration which he merits or some irrational attribute that is given him. It is, instead, the way that God makes Himself known through Himself by means of the man's intellectual and volitional intuition which is all a work of divine grace. This is to say, that for John of the Cross, intuitive knowledge (or any true knowledge of God) and union with God, fall within a relation of encounter between God the Creature-Sustainer, and God the Self-Giver in grace. It is the meeting of God as the "Ground of man's being" with God as Redeemer and Unction of man's being. Or, once again, it is the fulfilling by God the "wholly Other" with God the Loving Transformer.

Man knows God, then, not by bringing God down into the confines of creaturely logic, but by being taken up into a relation of God to Himself. In other words, God in all His transcendence is at liberty not only to give man his creaturely being and to sustain and uphold it from below, but He is also free by His creative presence to fulfill its relation to Himself and to open up human creatureliness to Himself in such a way that man is elevated to participate in a knowing of God by God. This latter experience is possible by the sharing in the relation between God coming to man as Redeemer, and God as man's creaturehood Sustainer making effective this greater relation to Himself. John declares this in the following example:

. . . God works in and communicates Himself to her [the soul] through Himself alone, without the intermediary of

angels or natural ability, for the exterior and interior senses, and all creatures, and even the very soul do very little toward the reception of the remarkable supernatural favors which God grants in this state.<sup>1</sup>

Having been made one with God, the soul is somehow God through participation. Although it is not God as perfectly as it will be in the next life, it is like the shadow of God. Being the shadow of God through this substantial transformation, it performs in this measure in God and through God what He through Himself does in it. For the will of the two is one will, and thus God's operation and the soul's is one. Since God gives Himself with a free and gracious will, so too the soul (possessing a will the more generous and free the more it is united with God) gives to God, God Himself in God; and this is a true and complete gift of the soul to God.<sup>2</sup>

. . . God always acts in this way--as the soul is able to see--moving, governing, bestowing being, power, graces, and gifts upon all creatures, bearing them all in Himself by His power, presence, and substance. And the soul sees what God is in Himself and what He is in His creatures in only one view, just as one who in opening the door of a palace beholds in one act the eminence of the person who dwells inside together with what he is doing.

That which I understand therefore as to how God effects this awakening and view of the soul (which is in Him substantially as is every creature) is that He removes some of the many veils and curtains hanging in front of it so that it might see Him as He is. And then that countenance of His, full of graces, becomes partially and vaguely discernible, for not all the veils are removed. Because all things are moving by His power, that which He is doing is evident as well, so that He seems to move in them and they in Him with continual movement. Hence it seems to the soul that, in being itself moved and awakened, it was God Who moved and awakened.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 35, vi.

<sup>2</sup>Flame 3, lxxviii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4, vii.

John of the Cross has many other modes for expressing this same relation of God to God in man's intuitional experience of Him. He interprets it in terms of Light to light, Love to love, and Divine "yes" to human "yes". Respectively, then, he says:

The light of grace which God had previously accorded this soul (by which He had illumined the eye of the abyss of its spirit, opened its eye to the divine light, and made it pleasing to Himself) called to another abyss of grace, which is this divine transformation of the soul in God. In this transformation the eye of the soul's feeling is so illumined and agreeable to God that we can say God's light and that of the soul are one, since the natural light of the soul is united with the supernatural light of God, so that only the supernatural light is shining--just as the light God created was united to the light of the sun, and now only the sun shines even though the other light is not lacking.<sup>1</sup>

. . . the soul . . . loves God, not through itself but through Him. This is a remarkable quality, for it loves through the Holy Spirit, as the Father and Son love each other, according to what the Son Himself declares through St. John: That the love with which You have loved Me be in them and I in them. [Jn. 17:26] The second excellence is to love God in God, for in this union the soul is vehemently absorbed in love of God, and God in great vehemence surrenders Himself to the soul. The third excellence of love is to love Him on account of Who He is. The soul does not love Him only because He is generous, good, and glorious to it, but with greater force it loves Him because He is all this in Himself essentially.<sup>2</sup>

. . . when the soul has reached such purity in itself and its faculties that the will is very pure and purged of other alien satisfactions and appetites in the inferior and superior parts, and has rendered its "yes" to God concerning all of this, since

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 3, lxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 3, lxxxii.

now God's will and the soul's are one through their own free consent, then the soul has attained the possession of God insofar as this is possible by way of the will and grace. And this means that in the "yes" of the soul, God has given the true and complete "yes" of His grace.<sup>1</sup>

Still another significant aspect of John's concept of intuitive cognition of God deserves brief attention before passing on to the volitional elements of his epistemology. It is his extreme trinitarian emphasis throughout each of his major works.

The content of the knowledge John claims as the result of his intuitive experience with God is trinitarian in essence. Far from being a vague mystical experience with an impersonal "Absolute," John's system leads to an awareness of God as Father, Son (Word) and Holy Spirit of Love.<sup>2</sup> This trinitarian emphasis of John is extremely important, due to its mediational role in his mystical experience, and due to its relational or interpersonal character in regard to the nature of the divine-human union.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3, xxiv.

<sup>2</sup>This personal factor distinguishes orthodox Christian mysticism from general religious mysticism. Hindu mysticism, for example, proposes substantial oneness of the soul (Atman) with the Absolute (Brahman). John of the Cross propounds a personal union with the triune God that retains the ontological distinction between God and man rather than lapsing into the depersonalization of absorptionism or the deification of absolute ontologism. These aspects of John's theology will be presented in greater detail in the section on "The Ontological Elements of Divine Union."

The revelation which the Mystical Doctor claims is, thus, not an immediate confrontation with the Creator in the sense that it is an encounter which short-circuits the Son and Holy Spirit. Interestingly, too, the confrontation is not the typically Eastern type of mysticism which tends to circumvent the mediation of the Son. John's unitive experience of God is mediated from the hand of the Father through the touch of the Son by the working of the Spirit. These three persons of the Godhead respectively give the soul forgiveness, life, and an extreme awareness of divine love. Accordingly he comments on the second stanza of the poem Living Flame of Love:

In this stanza the soul proclaims how the three Persons of the Most Blessed Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are they Who effect in it this divine work of union. Thus the hand, the cautery, and the touch are substantially the same. The soul applies these terms to the Persons of the Trinity because of the effect each of the Persons produces. The cautery is the Holy Spirit; the hand is the Father; and the touch is the Son. The soul here magnifies the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, stressing the three admirable favors and blessings they produce in it, having changed its death to life, transforming it in the Trinity.

The first is the delightful wound. This it attributes to the Holy Spirit, and hence calls Him a sweet cautery.

The second is the taste of eternal life. This it attributes to the Son, and thus calls Him a delicate touch.

The third is transformation, a gift by which all debts are fully paid. This it attributes to the Father, and hence calls it a gentle hand.

Although it names the three, according to the properties of their effects, it speaks only to one, saying, "You changed death to life," because all of them work together; and accordingly it attributes everything to one, and everything to all.<sup>1</sup>

John's concept of the Trinity is also noteworthy due to the nature of the divine union which he claims to experience through contemplation. It is an experience of God in His triune oneness. "The . . . revelation is the disclosure of secrets and hidden mysteries . . . which includes the revelation of the mystery of the three Persons in one God."<sup>2</sup> In the union, the soul is so close to God that "it is transformed into a flame of love in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are communicated to it."<sup>3</sup>

The Blessed Trinity inhabits the soul by divinely illumining its intellect with the wisdom of the Son, delighting its will in the Holy Spirit, and by absorbing it powerfully and mightily in the delightful embrace of the Father's sweetness.<sup>4</sup>

But for John the personal experience of God's Triune essence is more than a static revelation or vision. It is, instead, a participation in the very relations and work which inhere within the Persons of the Trinity itself. John expresses it in the following manner:

This breathing of the air is an ability which the soul states God will give her there in the communication of

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 2, i.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 27, i.

<sup>3</sup>Flame 1, vi.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., i. xv.

the Holy Spirit. By His divine breath-like spiration, the Holy Spirit elevates the soul sublimely and informs her and makes her capable of breathing in God the same spiration of love that the Father breathes in the Son and the Son in the Father, which is the Holy Spirit Himself, Who in the Father and the Son breathes out to her in this transformation in order to unite her to Himself. There would not be a true and total transformation if the soul were not transformed in the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity in an open and manifest degree.

And this kind of spiration of the Holy Spirit in the soul, by which God transforms her into Himself, is so sublime, delicate and deep a delight that a mortal tongue finds it indescribable, nor can the human intellect, as such, in any way grasp it. Even that which comes to pass in the communication given in this temporal transformation is unspeakable, for the soul united and transformed in God breathes out in God to God the very divine spiration which God--she being transformed in Him--breathes out in Himself to her.<sup>1</sup>

. . . the soul will participate in God Himself by performing in Him, in company with Him, the work of the Most Blessed Trinity, as we mentioned, because of the substantial union between the soul and God. Although this participation will be perfectly accomplished in the next life, still in this life when the soul has reached the state of perfection, as has the soul we are here discussing, she obtains a foretaste and noticeable trace of it in the way we are describing, although as we said it is indescribable.<sup>2</sup>

The epistemological significance of this emphasis by John of the Cross is that the knowledge of God to which he testifies is knowledge of God in His Triune nature and in His Triune relations with Himself. The reciprocal love, the purity of the absolute truth, holiness,

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 39, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 39, vi.



and the unity of will within the Godhead are all a part of the knowledge which John describes as a revelation of the mysteries of the Trinity. No understanding of his concept of union with God is possible apart from an awareness of his doctrine of God's sustaining immanence in creation, God's transcendent sovereignty in opening up human creaturely being to Himself, and the Triune aspects of this relationship once man is caught up in the revelation of transcendent God and immanent God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Volitional Aspects. The other aspect of the Scotus gnosiology which is important for the present inquiry is his relation of will to human understanding. Scotus wisely distinguishes the objects of man's knowledge into two categories with regard to their potential for communicating themselves to man. There are those "natural" objects which do not possess a will of their own and which are necessarily cognized by human intellect through the mode of causality. Then there are those "voluntary" objects of man's understanding which possess a will in themselves. A real knowledge of their being is possible only by their willed activity to make themselves known, and not by any natural mode of cognition on the part of the knower. This is especially true of mankind's knowledge of God. Human comprehension of Divinity is contingent upon the will of God to reveal Himself out of His sovereignty and grace. In other words, the Creator is not an object of man's

knowledge apart from His intention to reveal His Being of His own volition. Thus, no amount of discursive speculation about God on the part of man can make God known in Himself. Ideas of God derived from creation are what Scotus called oblique or secondary concepts, but no ontological knowledge of God is possible apart from His sovereign willingness to reveal Himself.

The other side of the will-equation is also a part of man's epistemological process. The will of man, too, must be operative and predisposed to receive the knowledge of God just as the divine Will must intend to reveal the Creator-God. Thus John says: "God does not place His grace and love in the soul except according to its will and love. Anyone truly loving God must strive not to fail in this love, for he will thereby induce God, if we may so express it, to further love him and find delight in his soul."<sup>1</sup> John of the Cross recognizes this mutual relationship between the knower and the Revealer and the volitional aspects involved in the intuitive experience of knowing God in His Word and the Spirit. He clearly ascertains that a true awareness of God can proceed only from the direct impact or causality of His divine Being. The effect of this recognition is a refreshing theology of a dialogical nature as over against the more prevalent theological

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 13, xii.

systems of his day, which depended heavily on dialectical and nominalistic modes of expression.

The epistemological foundation, then, in John's theology is basically intuitive, and the theological mode that John employs to ascertain knowledge of God is experiential as such experience takes place in the context of Biblical revelation and ecclesiastical piety. No adequate understanding of his theology is possible apart from these basic factors. The Mystical Doctor is not writing an autobiography or giving a personal testimony, as his colleague Theresa was so well known to do. John is writing about man's relationship to God as this is grounded in the experience of God out of His very Being, that is, our experience that must be in full accord with the divine and human natures taught in the Scriptures. This approach of St. John is not mystical in the sense that it is maintained apart from Christ, or independent from the Bible and church tradition. Far from this, John's theology leads us to union with God through Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit and within the context of the true teachings of the Church in regard to the Scriptures. He takes the Pauline doctrine of union with Christ, the Fourth Gospel's emphasis on abiding in Christ, and the Synoptics' idea of cross-carrying, and systematically teaches them as the normative way of life for all true Christians.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>The question of the nature of John's "union with God" concept

## II. Empirical Verification in John's Theology

That John's theological preparation in Medina del Campo and in Salamanca included studies in Augustinianism and Thomism has already been noted. That there were professors in the University of Salamanca and in Alcalá who taught the epistemological concepts of Duns Scotus has also been pointed out. But whether there is an actual historical connection between the Scotus lectures in these institutions and John of the Cross is not demonstrable, and, actually, is not particularly necessary for the present study. What is of significance is the apparent epistemological relationship between the intuitive method in the religious gnosiology propounded by Duns Scotus and the application of this method in the theology of John of the Cross. To miss this foundation in John's thought is to miss one of his principal contributions to theological science, and to lapse into superficial interpretations of his works, which is common among his interpreters.<sup>1</sup>

---

as a normative Christian relationship available for all disciples of Christ, or a special esoteric experience for only the spiritually elite is well presented in the thesis of John J. McMahon, M. S. C., S. T. L. His conclusion is that the "union" experience should be a state for all Christians rather than an occasional spiritual advance for a few. However, this matter will receive greater attention in subsequent sections of this present study. Cf. John J. McMahon, The Divine Union in the Subida del Monte Carmelo and the Noche Oscura of Saint John of the Cross (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1941).

<sup>1</sup>E. g., P. Martín de Jesu Maria, San Juan de la Cruz al

The Empirical Nature of John's Theology

The key words for a preliminary understanding of the theology of John of the Cross are: Holy Scripture, experience, and knowledge.<sup>1</sup> The Scriptures are of utmost importance to John because, as he states, él que en ella habla es el Espíritu Santo. (He that speaks in the Scriptures is the Holy Spirit.)<sup>2</sup> But the Mystical Doctor's use of the Scriptures parallels precisely his deep abandonment to the empirical method of dealing with theology. John never denies in his works the necessity of disciplined theological studies. Indeed, his three years of study at the University of Salamanca and the additional courses taken simultaneously at the Carmelite College in the same city, plus his year of post-graduate work in the university prove that he did not place experience above acquired knowledge in the preparation for

---

Alcance de Todos (Barcelona: Editorial Balmes, 1943), and Hildegard Waach, San Juan de la Cruz (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, S. A., 1960), et al.

<sup>1</sup>St. John of the Cross, Ascent, Prólogo, in Silverio, Obras, op. cit., p. 33. "No me fiaré ni de experiencia ni de ciencia porque lo uno y lo otro puede faltar y engañar; mas, no dejándome de ayudar en lo que pudiere de estas dos cosas, aprovecharme he para todo lo que con el favor divino hubiere de decir, a lo menos para lo más importante y oscuro de entender, de la Divina Escritura, por la cual guiándonos, no podremos errar, pues él que en ella habla es el Espíritu Santo."

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

service to God. But when he expresses in a literary manner his theological concepts, it is not in the usual scholastic mode of a systematized presentation of the rational arguments for God's existence, the reality of Christ's dual nature, the depravity of man, the work of the Holy Spirit, the eschatological hope of the Church, and the other pertinent doctrines of the Christian faith. John's theology is not a systematic treatment of church dogma per se, but it is a progressive presentation of Christian experience as it fulfills the will and love of God in arriving at a closer perfection of the soul by union with God. To denominate John of the Cross as simply "another mystic" is to misunderstand his method and his purpose. Far from being mystical in the esoteric sense, John is one of the most practical theologians in Christian history. In fact, his deep desire to be spiritually and theologically practical makes his works seem tedious, redundant, and filled with excessive explanations at times. But this is John's way of helping even the simplest of persons to come to greater Christ-likeness, through what he calls "union with God."

#### The Practical Bases of John's Empiricism

The empirical method of John of the Cross is but the out-working of three major aspects of his theology: (1) the nature of his subject matter, which is an intuitive knowledge of God out of His Being,

(2) the proximate and proportionate means for such knowledge, which is faith, and, (3) the experience in God-likeness which results from this knowledge--namely, union with the Almighty.

Divine Knowledge Out of God's Being. Even a cursory reading of the Ascent-Dark Night, the Spiritual Canticle, or the Living Flame reveals an author who writes in an a posteriori manner about God and His Being. That the theology taught in these pages has been practically experienced in the life of the author, there can be no doubt. It is not, however, the testimony of an emotionally unstable person who has merely been caught up in an ephemeral religious trauma and then requires that everyone else pass through the same experience in order to have "a feeling" of divinity.<sup>1</sup> Nor is John a mystic in the esoteric sense, who recommends certain cultic rites or ascetical practices to arrive at a knowledge of God that is beyond the capacity of most Christians' attainment. Since it is a Biblically based experience, he teaches that it can therefore be a reality in the everyday experience of any disciple of Christ who is willing to follow full self-denial and live

---

<sup>1</sup>It is regrettable that Brunner generalizes too greatly on his condemnation of mysticism when he says: "In mystical religion . . . feeling plays the decisive part. The experience of union with the Infinite. . . the infusion of the divinity with man is sought in mysticism precisely in feeling." Emil Brunner, Man In Revolt (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), p. 252. Actually John is in agreement with Brunner on the matter of "religious feeling" but he still advocates divine union.

by faith alone. A typical example of John's dual method of combining the Scriptures with practice (i. e., empiricism) is the following statement which he makes in one of his major works: "We have established this principle through the texts cited and through experience we verify it every day. We witness humble recipients of these experiences obtain new satisfaction, strength, light, and security. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

For John of the Cross, the way to God is not through nature as its logical First Cause, but it is more direct. Knowledge of God is not secondarily communicated through effects for the Carmelite saint, but it is personally communicated through the experience of union of the soul with God. Thus he says:

Although it is true that the soul is now able to see that these things [the beauties of nature, etc.] are distinct from God, inasmuch as they have a created being, and it sees them in Him, with their force, root and strength, it knows equally that God, in His own Being, is all these things, in an infinite and pre-eminent way, to such a point that it understands them better in His being than in themselves. And this is the great delight of this awakening: to know the creatures through God and not God through the creatures; to know the effects through their cause and not the cause through the effects; for the latter knowledge is secondary and this other is essential. <sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 22, xvi.

<sup>2</sup>Flame, 4, v. Peers, Complete Works of St. John, op. cit., p. 95. Peers translates the word trasero as "secondary," which is superior to Kavanaugh's eisegesis at this point by translating trasero as a posteriori. Kavanaugh, op. cit., p. 645. Trasero basically means "that which follows or is next," or "that which is second."



Far from beginning with a new concept of God, or a unique interpretation of Christology, or a radical doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church, John never deviates from teaching what he has personally experienced in his own relationship with God and his study of the Scriptures. To him, the experience of God is far more than a pantheistic deduction from nature, or a speculative doctrine from causal effects or mere intellectual assent to a second-handed creed-- it is a life of communion; a life of relationship to God in love; it is a dynamic and reciprocal fellowship with the triune Being of the Almighty.

John's subject matter is empirically relevant in all ages, then, due to its Biblical and practical nature. It is experienced theology which is scripturally based and systematically verbalized as the author's first-hand knowledge of God in Christ and expressed within the context of the Church. It is not taught as some extra-rational knowledge which pertains only to the occultly-inclined but is, instead, a concentrated investigation into a most thoroughly personal experience of God. John's doctrine is a study that is not content with a theoretical knowledge about God and His attributes. Indeed, he wants the experience of personally knowing God out of Himself and in accordance with His own self-revelation. The acquisition of this knowledge is not easy. It calls in question all of one's previous concepts of God, all of

his loves, desires and imaginings, and all of his religious devotions and spiritual exercises. It especially negates any ideas of God rooted in man's self-image and rules out all the simplistic theories of God based in naturalism and human reason alone.

The experience of divine union in John's writings also promises too great a transformation for man, and involves too great a sharing by God to be simply another discursive study of divine attributes and human failings. It is, instead, the scripturally and empirically based testimony of John regarding his experience of God out of God's very Being. But this experience cannot be reduced completely to a rationalized doctrine for, ultimately, it is the co-ordination of knowledge with divine Being, and the result is that the content of the experience necessarily supercedes and transcends all attempts to formalize its expression. Thus it is a knowing which can never be reduced simply to human explanations and rationalizations of it.

"Although at times a person uses words in reference to this knowledge, he clearly realizes that he has said nothing of his experience, for no term can give adequate expression to it."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 26, iv.

A person is capable of describing it only through general expressions--expressions caused by the abundance and delight of these experiences. But he realizes the impossibility of explaining with these expressions what he tasted and felt in this communication.

David after receiving a similar experience spoke in these unprecise and general terms: Judicia Domini vera, justificata in semetipsa. Desiderabilia super aurum et lapidem pretiosum multum, et dulciora super mel et favum (God's judgments--the virtues and attributes we experience in God--are true, in themselves justified, more desirable than gold and extremely precious stone, and sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb). [ Ps. 18-10-11 ]

We read that Moses spoke only in general terms of the lofty knowledge God, while passing by, gave him. And it happened that when the Lord passed before him in that knowledge, Moses quickly prostrated himself, crying: Dominator Domine Deus, misericors et clemens, patiens, et multae miserationis, ac verax. Qui custodis misericordiam in millia, etc. (Sovereign Lord God, merciful and clement, patient, and of great compassion, and true. You guard the mercy that you promise to thousands). [ Ex. 34:6-7 ] Evidently, since Moses could not express with one concept what he knew in God, he did so through an overflow of words.<sup>1</sup>

This divine knowledge is ontological knowledge of God which is empirically acquired through man's will and intellect. It is a knowledge of God's Being that is revealed without the recipient knowing how it is known, for the knowing process in relation to the divine Being cannot be reduced to the ordinary relations of knowing and speech. According to John of the Cross:

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 26, iii-iv.

The divine knowledge of God never deals with particular things, since its object is the Supreme Principle. Consequently one cannot express it in particular terms, unless a truth about something less than God is seen together with this knowledge of Him. But in no way can anything be said of that divine knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

It is in this sense that John calls his doctrine "mystical theology,"<sup>2</sup> and his comprehension of God "mystical understanding."<sup>3</sup> They are not mystical in the irrational, or non-rational, or even in an extra-rational sense, but their mystical nature inheres in their open-endedness. John's theology (and, indeed, all true theology) is mystical, because it deals with the transcendent Being of God, and therefore can never be fully known or fathomed. It is also mystical in that the receiver is incapable of describing the Being of God. It is an unknowing knowing that is experienced, rather than deduced, and it consists of a rational relation to the divine Being who transcends all human rational structures.

The soul remains, in consequence, as though ignorant of all things, since it knows only God without knowing how it knows Him. For this reason the bride in the Canticle of Canticles, when she states that she went down to Him, numbers unknowing among the effects this sleep and oblivion produced in her, saying: Nescivi (I knew not). [Ct. 6:10-11]<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 26, v.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, Prologue, iii; 27, v; et al.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Prologue, i, ii, et al.

<sup>4</sup>Ascent, II, 14, xi.

This extremely personal and ontological element in the theology of John of the Cross distinguishes his emphasis from that of Thomas Aquinas. Whereas the latter works more with an intellectual view of truth following Aristotle, the former deals primarily with the truth of being. In other words, John principally conceives of God as Being and Light, and not simply as Mind and the Fulfillment of Abstract Truth.

Another aspect of the nature of John's subject matter is its uniqueness in relation to the other empirical relations of man. It is something completely new in man's knowledge, and there are no analogies in man's environment with which he can compare it. In other words, the knowledge of God out of His Being which John claims to have experienced cannot be inferred from what is already known, and cannot be acquired by mere human logic. This fact is basic in John's repeated insistence upon the ultimate uselessness of discursive reasoning and natural logic as means to know God. It is not that these modes of cognition are not valuable, and, indeed, indispensable. It is simply that they require the known as their epistemological tools, and they are dependent on the natural for their basic premises. But the really new, the really unique, the transcendent Being of God, is unattainable through the idealization of the creaturely, and He remains unknown by the logical process of abstractions from what is naturally known through discursive reasoning.

John's emphasis on the "new" element in our knowledge of God is one of the most outstanding characteristics of his theology.

The following paragraphs can serve to illustrate his repeated emphasis on the newness and uniqueness of this knowledge of God as being an untrod and untraveled road for man in his ordinary experience.

Another reason the soul not only advances securely when it walks in darkness but even gains and profits is that when in a new way it receives some betterment, it usually does so in a manner it least understands, and thus ordinarily thinks it is getting lost. Since it has never possessed this new experience which makes it go out, blinds it, and leads it astray with respect to its first method of procedure, it thinks it is getting lost rather than marching on successfully and profitably; indeed, it is getting lost to what it knew and tasted, and going by a way in which it neither tastes nor knows.

To reach a new and unknown land and travel unknown roads, a man cannot be guided by his own knowledge, rather he has doubts about his own knowledge and seeks the guidance of others. Obviously he cannot reach new territory nor attain this added knowledge if he does not take these new and unknown roads and abandon those familiar ones. Similarly, when a person is learning new details about his art or trade, he must work in darkness and not with what he already knows. If he refuses to lay aside his former knowledge, he will never make any further progress. The soul, too, when it advances, walks in darkness and unknowing.

Since God, as we said, is the master and guide of the soul, this blind man, it can truly rejoice, now that it has come to understand as it has here, and say: in darkness, and secure.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, II, 16, viii. (Author's underlining.)

This quietude and tranquillity in God is not entirely obscure to the soul as is a dark night; but it is a tranquillity and quietude in divine light, in the new knowledge of God, in which the spirit elevated to the divine light is in quiet.

She very appropriately calls this divine light "the rising dawn," which means the morning. Just as the rise of morning dispels the darkness of night and unveils the light of day, so this spirit, quieted and put to rest in God, is elevated from the darkness of natural knowledge to the morning light of the supernatural knowledge of God. This morning light is not clear, as was said, but dark as night at the time of the rising dawn. Just as the night at the rise of dawn is not entirely night or entirely day, but is, as they say, at the break of day, so this divine solitude and tranquillity, informed by the divine light, has some share in that light, but not its complete clarity.

In this tranquillity the intellect is aware of being elevated, with strange newness, above all natural understanding to the divine light, just as a person who after a long sleep opens his eyes to the unexpected light.<sup>1</sup>

In another passage John compares the knowledge of God to "strange islands." These islands are not known by discursive reasoning nor by imaginative inference. They are only known empirically and heuristically, and their "strangeness" is John's way of emphasizing the newness and uniqueness of the knowledge of God in His very Being. Thus he says:

Strange islands are surrounded by water and situated across the sea, far withdrawn and cut off from communication with other men. Many things very different from what we have here are born and nurtured in these islands; they are of many

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 14 - 15, xxiii f. (Author's underlining.)

strange kinds and powers never before seen by men, and they cause surprise and wonder in anyone who sees them. Thus, because of the wonderful new things and the strange knowledge (far removed from common knowledge) which the soul sees in God, she calls Him "strange islands."

A man is called strange for either of two reasons: He is withdrawn from people; or, compared with other men, he is singular and superior in his deeds and works. The soul calls God "strange" for these two reasons. Not only is He all the strangeness of islands never seen before, but also His ways, counsels, and works are very strange and new and wonderful to man.

It is no wonder that God is strange to men who have not seen Him, since He is also strange to the holy angels and to the blessed. For the angels and the blessed are incapable of seeing Him fully, nor will they ever be capable of doing so. Until the day of the Last Judgment they will see so many new things in Him concerning His deep judgments and His works of mercy and justice that they will forever be receiving new surprises and marveling the more. Hence not only men but also the angels can call Him strange islands. Only to Himself is He neither strange nor new.<sup>1</sup>

John says of Christ that this knowledge belongs to the soul that goes to You by means of strange knowledge of You and by modes and ways that are foreign to all the senses and to common natural knowledge. And thus it is as though, desiring to oblige Him, [Christ], she [the soul] were to say: Since I go to You through a spiritual knowledge strange and foreign to the senses, let Your communication be so interior and sublime as to be foreign to all of them.<sup>2</sup>

The role of faith in revealing what man has never experienced before is one of John's principal themes. Faith illumines what is heretofore undiscovered or unperceivable.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 14-15, viii. (Author's underlining.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 19, vii. (Author's underlining, brackets.)



For example, if a man were informed that on a certain island there was an animal whose like or kind he had never seen, he would then have no more idea or image of that animal in his mind than previously, no matter how much he was told.

Another clearer example will shed more light on this subject: If a man born blind were told about the nature of the color white or yellow, he would understand absolutely nothing no matter how much instruction he received. Since he never saw these colors, nor their like, he would not have the means to form a judgment about them. Only their names would be grasped since the names are perceptible through hearing.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of communicating this divine knowledge to others once it is heuristically attained through auditive faith is not that it is beyond rationality in its nature, but it is its supernatural uniqueness that makes it incommunicable. When one desires to share this revelation of the transcendent Being of God, he discovers a complete lack of vocabulary and known analogies with which to compare it.

. . . he finds no adequate means or similitude to signify so sublime an understanding and delicate a spiritual feeling. Even if the soul should desire to convey this experience in words and think up many similitudes, the wisdom would always remain secret and still to be expressed.

Since this interior wisdom is so simple, general, and spiritual that in entering the intellect it is not clothed in any sensory species or image, the imaginative faculty cannot form an idea or picture of it in order to speak of it; this wisdom did not enter through these faculties nor did

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 3, ii f.

they behold any of its apparel or color. Yet the soul is clearly aware that it understands and tastes that delightful and wondrous wisdom. If a man were to behold an object never before seen in itself or in its likeness, he would be unable to describe it or give it a name no matter how much he tried, even though he does understand and find satisfaction in it. And if he should encounter such difficulty in describing what he perceives through the senses, how much greater difficulty he will have in expressing what does not enter through the senses. The language of God has this trait: Since it is very spiritual and intimate to the soul, transcending everything sensory, it immediately silences the entire ability and harmonious composite of the exterior and interior senses.

We have examples of this ineffability of the divine language in Sacred Scripture. Jeremias manifested his incapacity to describe it when, after God had spoken to him, he knew of nothing more to say than ah, ah, ah. [Jer. 1:6] Moses also declared before God, present in the burning bush, his interior inability (the inability of both his imagination and his exterior senses). [Ex. 4:10] He asserted that he was not only unable to speak of this converse but that he did not even dare consider it in his imagination, as is said in the Acts of the Apostles. [Acts 7:32] He believed that his imagination was not only as it were dumb in the matter of forming some image of what he understood in God, but also incapable of receiving this knowledge.

Since the wisdom of this contemplation is the language of God to the soul, of Pure Spirit to the spirit alone, all that is less than spirit such as the sensory, fails to perceive it. Consequently this wisdom is secret to the senses; they have neither the knowledge nor ability to speak of it, nor do they even desire to do so because it is beyond words.<sup>1</sup>

It would be foolish to think that expressions of love arising from mystical understanding, like these stanzas, are fully explainable. The Spirit of the Lord, who abides in us and aids our weakness,

---

<sup>1</sup>Night II, 17, iii f.

as St. Paul says [Rom. 8:26], pleads for us with unspeakable groanings in order to manifest what we can neither fully understand nor comprehend.

Who can describe the understanding He gives to loving souls in whom He dwells? And who can express the experience He imparts to them? Who, finally, can explain the desires He gives them? Certainly, no one can! Not even they who receive these communications. As a result these persons let something of their experiences overflow in figures and similes, and from the abundance of their spirit pour out secrets and mysteries rather than rational explanations.

If these similitudes are not read with the simplicity of the spirit of knowledge and love they contain, they will seem to be absurdities rather than reasonable utterances, as will those comparisons of the divine Canticle of Solomon and other books of Sacred Scripture where the Holy Spirit, unable to express the fullness of His meaning in ordinary words, utters mysteries in strange figures and likenesses.<sup>1</sup>

From these passages it is apparent that a wholly distinctive empirical relation is involved in John's epistemology. He is not logically arguing merely for the existence of God, as scholasticism was prone to do, but he is testifying to the availability of a personal experience of the very Being of God through a mode of discovery that is not dependent on man's discursive reasoning powers, nor on his prior learning attainments.

This night withdraws the spirit from its customary manner of experience to bring it to the divine experience which is foreign to every human way. It seems to the soul in this night that it is being carried out of itself by afflictions. At

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, Prologue, i.

other times a man wonders if he is not being charmed, and he goes about with wonderment over what he sees and hears. Everything seems so very strange even though he is the same as always. The reason is that he is being made a stranger to his usual knowledge and experience of things so that annihilated in this respect he may be informed with the divine, which belongs more to the next life than to this.<sup>1</sup>

The mode for receiving this "new" and "strange" knowledge of God out of His Being involves a two-fold determination in man. On the active side, heuristic faith is required, and on the passive side a concerted exercise in forgetting is essential.<sup>2</sup> In order to know God ontologically one must learn to forget intellectually and emotionally. To know the "new", the old ways of knowing must be forgotten. This is because, in John's theology, the "new" cannot be known by assimilating, reducing, or relating it to what is already known through the "old." For John, there must of necessity take place a radical reconstruction in what we presently know in order to effect the changes in our thinking processes for the "new" knowledge to be able to enter. While there is the least dependence on the old ways of rationalizing, the new knowledge cannot penetrate to the soul. In Biblical language, there must be a complete intellectual and emotional repentance if there is to be a realistic encounter and appreciation of God out of His Being.

---

<sup>1</sup>Night II, 9, v. (Author's underlining.)

<sup>2</sup>The extensive treatment of "faith" in John's theology requires a separate consideration of this doctrine in a subsequent section of the present study.

This repentance or forgetting includes a breaking away from all stereotyped modes of thinking and a humility which isolates man from any dependence on his active reason as a means to divine knowledge. As John puts it, there must be a complete lack of confidence in the operations of man's agent intellect, since the self-revelation by God is received in the "passive or possible" intellect.<sup>1</sup> This means that for knowing God, there must be an un-knowing of what is already known.

To reach union with God the intellect must obviously blind itself to all the paths along which it can travel. Aristotle teaches that just as the sun is total darkness to the eyes of a bat, so the brightest light in God is complete darkness to our intellect. And he teaches in addition that the loftier and clearer the things of God are in themselves, the more unknown and obscure they are to us. [Metaphys., lib. brevior, c. 1, ed. Didot, II, 486] The Apostle also affirms this teaching: That which is highest in God is least known by men. [Rom. 11:33]

We would never finish if we continued to quote passages and present arguments as proof that there is no ladder among all created, knowable things by which the intellect can reach this high Lord. Rather, it should be known that if the intellect did desire to use all or any of these objects as a proximate means to this union, they would not be merely an encumbrance to it, but also an occasion of many errors and deceptions in the ascent of this mount.<sup>2</sup>

The forgetting exercise through which the soul passes before receiving the knowledge of God is an attitude of the intellect rather than

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 14, xiv.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 8, vi f.

an actual eraser of all previously acquired learning. This indispensable attitude means that the recipient of God's self-revelation first disciplines himself to forget all dependence on his own acquired learning and to ignore all personal capabilities to rationally convince himself and others of God's existence and nature. He experiences a kenosis of the soul which is absolutely essential for union with God. John discusses this emptying and forgetting attitude and its relation to previously acquired knowledge in the following manner:

This is a characteristic of God's spirit in soul: He gives her an immediate inclination toward ignoring and not desiring knowledge of the affairs of others, especially that which brings her no benefit. God's spirit is turned toward the soul to draw her away from external affairs rather than involve her in them. Thus she remains in an unknowing, in the manner she was accustomed to.

It should not be thought that because she remains in this unknowing that she loses there her acquired knowledge of the sciences; rather these habits are perfected by the more perfect habit of supernatural knowledge infused in her. Yet these habits do not reign in such a way that she must use them in order to know; though at times she may still use them, as this supernatural knowledge does not impede their use. For in this union with divine wisdom these habits are joined to the superior wisdom of God. When a faint light is mingled with a bright one, the bright light prevails and is that which illumines. Yet the faint light is not lost, but rather perfected, even though it is not the light which illumines principally.

Such, I believe, will be the case in heaven. The habits of the acquired knowledge of the just will not be supplanted, but they will not be of great benefit either, since the just will have more knowledge through the divine wisdom than through these habits.

Yet particular knowledge, forms of things, imaginative acts, and any other apprehensions involving form and figure are all lost and ignored in that absorption of love. <sup>1</sup>

The divine knowledge received in John's experience of God is not, therefore, the result of man's mental deductions, nor the reward of his idealization of the naturally known. Rather it is a personal experience of God's Being which ultimately defies analysis and adequate description. One of the most interesting expressions in John's writings illustrates this point. He calls the knowledge of God "un no sé qué" (an I-don't-know-what). <sup>2</sup> He expounds upon this phrase by saying:

. . . there is a certain "I-don't-know-what" which one feels is yet to be said, something unknown still to be spoken, and a sublime trace of God, as yet uninvestigated, revealed to the soul, a lofty understanding of God which cannot be put into words. Hence she calls this something "I-don't-know-what." . . .

Sometimes God favors advanced souls, through what they hear, see, or understand--and sometimes independently of this--with a sublime knowledge by which they receive an understanding or experience of the height and grandeur of God. Their experience of God in this favor is so lofty that they understand clearly that everything remains to be understood. This understanding and experience that the divinity is so immense as to surpass complete understanding is indeed a sublime knowledge.

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 26, xv ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 7.

One of the outstanding favors God grants briefly in this life is an understanding and experience of Himself so lucid and lofty as to make one know clearly that He cannot be completely understood or experienced. This understanding is somewhat like that of the Blessed in heaven: Those who understand God more, understand more distinctly the infinitude which remains to be understood; whereas those who see less of Him do not realize so clearly what remains to be seen.

I do not think anyone who has not had such experience will understand this well. But, since the soul experiencing this is aware that what she has so sublimely experienced remains beyond her understanding, she calls it "I-don't-know-what." Since it is not understandable, it is indescribable, although, as I say, one may know what the experience of it is.<sup>1</sup>

To summarize this extremely significant aspect of John's theology, then, it bears repeating that his epistemological basis is rooted in empirical relations with the divine Being, and not in a priori conclusions derived from sparks of the divine in man or from man's own reasoning attainments. John's theological thrust is toward a first-hand knowledge of God's Being which is received through personal experience with the infinite essence of God. In this experience, God elevates the soul unto Himself, and thus it leaves behind its former inadequate habits, operations, and particular knowledge which impede its entrance into God.

. . . if it [the soul] would have particular knowledge, it would not advance. The reason is that God transcends the intellect and is incomprehensible and inaccessible to it.

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit., 7, ix f.



Hence while the intellect is understanding, it is not approaching God but withdrawing from Him. It must withdraw from itself and from its knowledge so as to journey to God in faith, by believing and not understanding. In this way it reaches perfection, because it is joined to God by faith and not by any other means, and it reaches God more by not understanding than by understanding.

Do not be disturbed on this account; if the intellect does not turn back (which it would do if it were to desire to be occupied with particular knowledge and other discursive reflections), but desires to remain in idleness, it advances. It thereby empties itself of everything comprehensible to it, because none of that is God; as we have said, God does not fit in an occupied heart. In this matter of striving for perfection, not to turn back is to go forward, and the intellect goes forward by establishing itself more in faith, and thus advances by darkening itself, for faith is darkness to the intellect. Since the intellect cannot understand the nature of God, it must journey in submission to Him rather than by understanding, and thus it advances by not understanding. For its own well-being, the intellect should be doing what you condemn, that is, it should avoid busying itself with particular knowledge, for it cannot reach God through this knowledge, which would rather hinder it in its advance toward Him.<sup>1</sup>

John's writings fill many pages with his kenotic emphasis on the need to empty the intellect, memory, and affections before God's Being can infill the soul. As stated above, "God does not fit in an occupied heart."<sup>2</sup> In this manner, John grounds his mystical theology in an openness of the entire soul for God. In the intellect there must be open concepts, open rational structures and open epistemological modes. In the memory there must be complete open retention.<sup>3</sup> John

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame III, 48.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>E. g., Ascent III, 2.

repeatedly warns against the tendency to settle down into a possessive relation toward previously acquired knowledge and toward all other things of this world.<sup>1</sup> He even insists on a complete openness in relation to one's affectional attachments. This applies to what he describes as temporal goods,<sup>2</sup> natural goods,<sup>3</sup> sensory goods,<sup>4</sup> moral goods,<sup>5</sup> supernatural goods,<sup>6</sup> and spiritual goods.<sup>7</sup> In each case the Saint teaches against any type of exclusive attitude with regard to these "goods." If one is to experience God, even the emotional attachments must be absolutely open to Him rather than being closed by degrees of exclusiveness.

John's epistemological emphasis is not, however, to be confused with Quietism of the Molinos type.<sup>8</sup> Though both monks advocate

<sup>1</sup>E. g., Ascent II, II, vii f; Night I, 3, i ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent III, 17.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., III, 21.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., III, 24.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., III, 27.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., III, 30.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., III, 33.

<sup>8</sup>Though Juan Falconi (d. 1632) is generally reckoned as the father of Quietism, his Spanish countryman Miguel de Molinas (d. 1696) popularized the quietistic tenets in Rome and the official Church.

passivity, tranquillity, and quietness in their epistemological modes, they are poles apart in their purpose, and basic theology. Quietism sought to know God's will in ethics and morals, through passivity, and it claimed immediate divine inspiration of the conscience by quieting the intellect and will. John of the Cross claims an experience with God's very Being rather than a revelation of abstract truth. Quietism, on the other hand, tended to become a via to divine knowledge which was superior to that of the Scriptures and ecclesiastical piety. John of the Cross teaches an empirical knowledge of God which is directed by the Scriptures and approved by the Church. In other words, the passivity taught by John is not for an immediate reception of an ethical revelation, but it is for the activity of God's Being in one's life.

Divine Knowledge by A-posteriori Modes. The method that John of the Cross employs in his theological presentation is further indication of his empirical approach. The method is not the usual dialectic used by most theologians of his day, nor is it the customary preceptive plan followed by others. John's method is inductive or a-posteriori in that he moves from experience to doctrine, from practice to precept. This does not mean that the experience is not theologically and Biblically based. The uniqueness of John is that he goes from the Scriptures to experience to knowledge, whereas in most theological systems the intermediate step is more theorized than actualized and,

in many systems, the order is reversed completely.

By this method, John requires of his readers the full crucifixion of all sensory and sentimental attachments as has been indicated previously. In addition to these he explains the necessity to put to death all unworthy religious attachments, such as preconceived ideas of God, affection for special prayers, crosses, religious places, etc.<sup>1</sup> The depths of self-denial to which John leads his followers seems unbelievable, but it is all a part of his resolute desire to lead souls to the heights of "union with God."

This unitive relationship with God is not merely a goal to be attained in John's theology, but rather it is a life to be lived in love and a knowledge of God to use in divine service. Divine union is more than an occasional ecstasy which only the faithful are permitted to taste. It is, for John, the only real experience of life itself. It is what is meant by the indwelling presence of Christ in the disciples,<sup>2</sup> the denial of self and taking up of the cross,<sup>3</sup> the putting off of the old man and putting on of the new,<sup>4</sup> and the crucifixion of self to have Christ live in us.<sup>5</sup> Nothing could be more practical than John's empirical

---

<sup>1</sup>E. g., Ascent III, 35 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Flame, Prologue, 2, following John 14:23.

<sup>3</sup>Ascent, III, 23, following Matthew 16:24.

<sup>4</sup>Flame, 2, following Ephesians 4:22. <sup>5</sup>Ibid., following Gal. 2:20.

approach to these basic (though unpopular) themes of the Christian faith. The Carmelite saint probably would have received far greater acceptance in his day had he simply theorized about the practice of sanctification in the teachings of Christ and the Apostle Paul. But his permanent place in the history of the church is due to his persistence in favor of the personal experience of God rather than a priori doctrines about God. This does not mean that he was unversed or unconcerned about the discursive theological systems of his day. He knew their great value for interpreting experience, but he also recognized their extreme limitations as a means of producing an intuitive and experiential knowledge of God out of God's very Being. In the Prologue to the Spiritual Canticle, he writes to Mother Ann of Jesus, Prioress of the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Granada, and makes this typical, but revealing, statement:

I hope that, although some scholastic theology is used here in reference to the soul's interior converse with God, it will not prove vain to speak in such a manner to the pure of spirit. Even though Your Reverence lacks training in scholastic theology by which the divine truths are understood, you are not wanting in mystical theology which is known through love and by which one not only knows but at the same time experiences.<sup>1</sup>

His Empirical Use of Scripture. The empirical method of John of the Cross is also seen in the manner in which he uses the

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, Prologue, 3.

Scriptures in his writings. Judged by modern historical, literary, and form methods of Biblical criticism and exegesis, John, of course, would not be a scientific theologian. He used the literary tools and hermeneutical systems of his day and his value as a Biblical theologian lies not only in the quantity of Scripture references found in his writings,<sup>1</sup> but, more basically, in the empirical way in which he employs them. He does not begin with a text and expound its meaning any more than he begins with a church dogma and dialectically develops it. John begins with the basic need of mankind for a more personal experience of God in their lives. He begins in life, in the practical, in the slums of personal depravity, and he goes downward step-by-step into the innermost caverns of the soul to re-examine every phase of human pride and dependence which is not fully a matter of utter faith. He then shows through the Scriptures and experience the Divine plan for bridging the relational and ontological gap between man and God. Almost every major point in St. John's writings is supported with practical texts from the Scriptures. By practical texts is meant that the mystical author relies heavily on passages grounded in the spiritual experiences of Israel in general, of Old Testament saints in particular, of Christ and the Apostles in the New Testament era. In other words,

---

<sup>1</sup>In the four major works (Ascent of Mount Carmel, Dark Night, Spiritual Canticle, Flame of Love) which occupy 705 pages in the Silveriano edition, there are over 900 Bible texts quoted. Others are alluded to, and still others are the basis for many of the doctrinal ideas of John's writings.

John sees the Bible as a record of God's self-revelation to men principally by way of experience rather than precept. He uses the texts not so much as logical support for his doctrine, but rather an empirical proof for the spiritual experience with God that he is advocating.

This use of Scripture is distinct from that found in Aquinas and others of Medieval Roman theology. It represents a practical use of the inspired writings which stands in sharp contrast to the prevailing methods of John's day when Bible texts were used more in a supportive way for speculative theological concepts. And, though John's hermeneutics may be somewhat lacking by twentieth century standards, it was superior to the nominalistic methods of his day and to those of the present who use nominalism as their interpretive basis for expounding the Scriptures. The Mystical Doctor is not so preoccupied with the interpretation of isolated words of the Bible as he is anxious to share in the experiences of John the Apostle, Paul the missionary, and the Old Testament prophets. They are meaningful in all ages, not for their speculative ideas of God, but for their real encounter with God's Being and Love.

The theological method, then, of John of the Cross is always a posteriori whether it be in the nature of his subject matter or his method used in presenting the subject matter or the use he makes of

the Scriptures. His consuming objective for himself and for his readers is to know God in His very Being, and not merely out of pure logic or by sensory or imaginary images. John is not content with anything but an apprehension of God Himself--by real encounter--by personal relationship--and by the abiding union of faith and love. To have this kind of knowledge of God, he is fully aware of the profound consequences to personal pride, and to one's existing so-called "religious knowledge," which is commonly conditioned by selfish desires and pleasures. To these fundamental obstacles and to others in man's pathway toward the knowledge of God in His own self-revelation, John addresses his theology. If at times the result appears to be excessively negative, it is all a part of his empirical method which of necessity first involves the kenosis of every habit, desire, or concept which does not leave us free from ourselves and our self-centeredness, in order to know God and His "outgoingness" called love.

### III. The Primacy of Faith in John's Theology

The goal of the Christian life, according to John of the Cross, is to be united with God in a dynamic oneness of love, and the road to that goal is faith and faith alone. Thus, the doctrine of faith is of capital importance in his theology, for it is the key to understanding the nature of "infused contemplation", of "unitive love," and of the



union experience itself. John focuses the whole of his theology through the lens of faith, and only through faith. No aspect of his theological teachings finds rootage outside this doctrine and he grounds the source of faith in the Being of God Himself.

Generally speaking, faith in John's writings is combined with the three-fold mode of God's dealings with mankind in grace. Faith deals particularly with the intellectual faculty of the soul, hope relates to the memory faculty, and love acts in the will, or more particularly in the affections of the soul. But, in the working out of all this divine movement, John gives a primacy to the role of faith that makes it fundamental to his entire theological witness. Thus, hope is rooted in faith, love is grounded in faith, contemplation is infused by faith, and the union experience is maintained in faith. This divinely given virtue is related also in his writings to each of the three persons of the Trinity, to grace, to reason, to divine knowledge, to the Church, to eschatology, and to every other doctrine in John's experience. He knows of nothing in the Christian life which is not made possible through the mode of faith.

The outline for presently analyzing the primacy of faith in John's theology will take the following form: (1) the function of faith in relation to divine knowledge, (2) the particular role of faith in relation to divine knowledge, and, (3) the source and ground of faith.

The Function of Faith in Relation  
to Divine Knowledge

Perhaps the best summary statement of the role which St. John ascribes to faith is the inclusive declaration in the Canticle where he says: "Faith gives us God."<sup>1</sup> With such a sublime role to fulfill in man's experience, it is apparent that faith will have tremendous weight to carry in John's system. This is especially true where faith is spoken of as the only means of divine knowledge. It is the key to an understanding of the epistemological method in each of his works.

The Ontological Nature of Divine Knowledge. In any study of John's theology, a clear distinction must be maintained between the two kinds of religious knowledge involved in man's experience. The first knowledge is "natural knowledge," which is derived directly from the senses or from the relation of sensorially received data to ideas deduced in the intellect. In any case, it is knowledge about things, persons, and concepts, and it may result in knowledge about God when such cognition is speculatively deduced from the facts of creation. This "particular" knowledge cannot be an empirical knowledge of God out of His Being simply because it is not divinely revealed. Furthermore, natural knowledge can become a serious obstacle to man's union with

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 12, iv.

God, since man frequently endeavors to content himself in this secondary knowledge rather than be confronted with the very presence of God Himself. Also, this knowledge is harmful in that man desires to confuse it with the knowledge of faith as an additional means toward knowing God, but, in actuality, there is no possibility of knowing God intuitively and directly except by faith and faith alone.

The other kind of religious cognition in John's theology is the knowledge of direct encounter with the very Being of God, so that the light which is derived from it is not discursively deduced, but is intuitively experienced. This distinction is decisive in understanding John's teachings, for though he is not in opposition to discursive knowledge as such, he clearly sees the radical difference between knowledge about God and knowledge out of God--knowledge derived from the relation of ideas concerning God's nature as deduced from creation, and knowledge intuitively received by a personal awareness of God in the Word.

The basic nature of divine knowledge, according to John of the Cross, is personal and ontological. To be apprehended by it is to be aware of the very Being of God. It cannot be apprehended by any amount of dialectical reasoning or any exercise of the imagination. It is knowledge which is divine in its very essence, and therefore its reception depends wholly on God's sovereign self-revelation. It is never

apprehended. It is only received. It is completely supernatural in origin and character, and thus it is beyond the capability of man through the active reason, or whatever natural means he employs, to attain. This theme underlies every page of John's theology because he senses that mankind prefers to depend on knowledge produced through human intellectual activity than that which is divinely produced and thereby sets aside the pride of man. Thus, in speaking about knowing God out of His being, John makes it clear that:

This knowledge is not produced by the intellect which the philosophers call the agent intellect, which works upon the forms, phantasies, and apprehensions of the corporal faculties; rather it is produced in the possible or passive intellect. This possible intellect, without the reception of these forms, etc., receives passively only substantial knowledge, which is divested of images and given without any work or active function of the intellect.<sup>1</sup>

The Mystical Doctor occasionally employs different terminology to denote the distinctions between these two types of knowledge, though with greater frequency he indicates to which type he is referring by the context. He designates his own teachings of God as "mystical theology,"<sup>2</sup> because it is the empirical knowledge of God acquired through faith and love, and not through ordinary (i. e., non-mystical) means. It is mystical in the sense that it is not naturally apprehended by human

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 39, xii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Prologue, iii, et al.

reason and the human will, but is received passively as a gift of the sovereign grace of God. The mode for receiving this awareness of God is faith, and the process by which it is communicated is called "contemplation" in John of the Cross. Both of these aspects of the epistemological journey toward divine union will subsequently be discussed in this study, but they are mentioned here to indicate the supernaturalness of divine knowledge in John's theology and the supernatural nature of the mode in which God is experienced.

One further element in the nature of divine knowledge requires attention at this point. Since the nature of God is not only Wisdom, but is also Love, the knowledge which is received from Him is loving in character, in addition to being cognitive. Thus, it is a knowledge divinely infused by faith to the center of man's affections--the will, and to the center of man's reason--the intellect. For this reason John frequently calls this supernaturally imparted knowledge noticia amorosa (loving knowledge) since it involves a divine awareness both in the cognitive order and in the volitional (or affectional) order.

Since God communicates this knowledge and understanding in the love with which He communicates Himself to the soul, it is very delightful to the intellect, since it is a knowledge belonging to the intellect, and it is delightful to the will since it is communicated in love, which pertains to the will.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 27, v.

The knowledge of God is thus completely "divine" in the primary and personal sense. It is God in His very Being that is known; it is God and God alone that gives His ὁντινία to be known, and, it is God that establishes faith as the mode whereby He is known.

Faith as the Proportionate Means of Divine Knowledge. Once it is understood that for John of the Cross, divine knowledge is identical with God's very Being, it is clear that the experience of divine knowledge and divine union are one and the same in his theology. To him there is no distinction between knowing God out of Himself and being possessed by God in grace. The only difference between divine possession and complete divine union is a matter of degree, though the habitual and spiritual transformation which takes place between the initial stages of grace and its ultimate realization in divine union is considerable in John's teaching.

How is the infused loving knowledge of God's Being received? If man's active intellect is incapable of producing it, and if man's will cannot decide it, how is the knowledge of God given to man? What means are available for man's intellect and will to attain the loving knowledge of God? The conclusive answer that John gives is that only "by means of faith . . . does God reveal Himself to the Soul."<sup>1</sup> "The more intense a man's faith, the closer is his union with God."<sup>2</sup> "Faith is that admirable means for advancing to God, our goal."<sup>3</sup> Thus the only

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 9, 1.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 2, 1.

"proximate and proportionate means" for attainment of divine knowledge (i. e., divine union) is faith.<sup>1</sup>

Emphasis should be given to the fact that in St. John's theology it is not faith and other means, but it is faith alone that is the divine mode of self revelation. Thus it is not faith and discursive reasoning, or faith and preternatural visions, etc., or faith and some other natural or supernatural means that makes God known. Divine knowledge comes only by "living in faith alone, not a faith that is exclusive of charity, but a faith that excludes other intellectual knowledge. . . . For faith does not fall into the province of the senses."<sup>2</sup> The intellect of man, in order to approach God, must "withdraw from itself and from its knowledge so as to journey to God in faith by believing. . . . In this way it reaches perfection because it is joined to God by faith and not by any other means. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

John of the Cross knows of no other road to God than that of faith alone. He knows of no faculty of man's intellectual, emotional, sensory, or psychic nature which can be a means of divine knowledge. No amount of practical or academic knowledge is a substitute for, or an aid to, faith in the exercise of knowing God in Himself. That it is a

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 9, i.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 2, iii.

<sup>3</sup>Flame, 3, xi.

faith which contains hope and is exercised in love, there can be no doubt, but to know God intuitively in His Being requires that the means be this kind of faith and nothing else. It is faith alone, or there is no divine knowledge.

### The Primary Relation of Faith to Man's Intellect

In St. John's concept of the soul's nature, he conceives of its faculties or functions as being divided into three major modes. Thus, he speaks of (1) the intellect, which has to do with the apprehension of all types of knowledge, whether sensorial or spiritual, natural or supernatural; (2) the memory, which is also a cognitive faculty having to do principally with knowledge of the past and the future; and (3) the will, which pertains primarily to the volitional decisions of man, and to his affections, appetite, passions, desires, etc.<sup>1</sup>

This brief analysis of the psychic faculties of man are indicated here because it is to the intellect that John relates the function of faith. Hope works in and through the memory, and love is effective through the affections and will, but faith operates in the intellect of the soul.

---

<sup>1</sup>A fuller presentation of John's teaching about the soul's anatomy will be given subsequently in the analysis of the divine union experience.



Faith Nullifies Attachment to Intellect-Acquired Knowledge.

To understand more fully the thoroughness of John's method and the prominence he gives to the role of faith in relation to the intellect, it is worth noting the functions that he attributes to this faculty. To begin with, he classifies into two major divisions the intellectual apprehensions of the mind: the natural and the supernatural.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, natural knowledge is everything the intellect can comprehend through the senses or by reflection. Supernatural knowledge includes everything imparted to the intellect in a manner transcending its natural ability and capacity. John then subdivides the latter knowledge into: (1) corporal knowledge, which is derived from exterior bodily senses and from interior bodily senses, such as the imagination, and (2) spiritual knowledge, which he divides into particular and general. Particular spiritual knowledge includes those concepts communicated to the spirit, without the use of bodily senses, such as visions, revelations, locutions, and spiritual feelings. General spiritual knowledge, which is another way of expressing John's exercise in devotion and

---

<sup>1</sup>John's use of the word sobrenatural (supernatural) appears too extensive at times. The context indicates in many instances that a better choice would have been the word preternatural. In this manner he could have distinguished better between those ideas, visions, etc., of divine origin, and those of a non-sensorial origin which are not supernatural in their substance, but beyond the ordinary in their essence.

obedience called "contemplation," is that pure apprehension of God that comes only by union with His Being.<sup>1</sup>

Faith is related by John of the Cross to each of these classifications of intellectual apprehensions, and, with the exception of the general spiritual knowledge, he systematically demonstrates that utter detachment from these forms of knowledge is necessary for divine union to be effected. "The purpose of faith is to darken all confidence in the intellect and, if this light is not darkened, the knowledge of faith is lost." Faith, then, in John's theology, exercises the role of a dark night to man, for "by blinding, it [faith] illumines him" in that the more darkness faith brings to the intellect, "the more light it sheds."<sup>2</sup> This dark detachment from sensory knowledge also applies to the part of man's nature "which bears relation to God and spiritual things . . . this . . . is the rational or higher part of his nature."<sup>3</sup>

This "rational or higher part" of man's nature includes the intellect and all its natural and supernatural concepts about God and His attributes. These must be set to one side in complete detachment from

---

<sup>1</sup> Ascent, II, 10, ii-iv.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., II, 3, iv.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., II, 4, ii.

man's confidence in them and their content must be absolutely isolated from any confusion with the self-revelation of God in the Word. Even real or imagined visions of "persons from the other life (such as saints and angels)," and, the hearing of "special words of phrases"<sup>1</sup> without knowing the source, should be un-sought-after, and, when they occur spontaneously, they should not be esteemed as valid revelations of God.

He who esteems these apprehensions is in serious error and extreme danger of being deceived. Or at least he will hinder his spiritual growth because, as we mentioned, these corporal perceptions bear no proportion to what is spiritual. These manifestations ought always to be considered diabolical more certainly than divine. For the devil possesses greater leeway in influencing the exterior and corporal part of man. He can deceive the soul more readily through this action than through a more interior and spiritual kind.<sup>2</sup>

This type of religious knowledge is to be rejected because of its questionable source and because of its tendency toward developing religious pride and complacency, and the danger of its being confused with the true revelation of God, which is greater. To desire more of it is contrary to humility and to true spiritual progress, even if it is from God. These visions and other sensory apprehensions cannot serve as a means for union with God simply because they bear no ontological proportion to God's being.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ascent, II, 11, ii; vi-ix.

<sup>2</sup> Ascent, II, 10, iii.

<sup>3</sup> Ascent, II, 10, v, vii, and xii.

Another kind of religious knowledge which must be probed, questioned, and brought before the scrutiny of faith is that which is acquired through the two interior bodily senses termed by John as: imagination and phantasy. The first is discursive in function, and the latter is the source of mental images and thoughts in man's mind. They can be acted upon in three ways: (1) by God, in which case the knowledge is received in a completely passive form, (2) by Satan, in an active and passive manner, and (3) they can function actively of themselves through meditation.<sup>1</sup> Whatever their origin, John of the Cross advocates that, if the soul is to reach divine union, it should empty itself of those mental images because, by nature and origin, they cannot serve as an adequate, proximate means to God's Being.<sup>2</sup> John is no iconoclast<sup>3</sup> but he sees the dangers of retaining before the eye or the mind anything fashioned by the hand or the imagination of man. To

---

<sup>1</sup>In John of the Cross the exercise of meditation is distinguished from the higher communion with God, called "contemplation." The former is for beginners while the latter is for proficients. Meditation is preparatory for contemplation, which is divinely infused. In meditation the participant is active; in contemplation he is passive. Cf. Night, I, 10, vi; Ascent, II, 13, v, and II, 14, i. (Note especially Ascent, II, 13.) Kavanaugh, op. cit., pp. 318, 141, and 142.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, II, 12, iii; ibid., p. 137.

<sup>3</sup>See Ascent III, 15, ii for John's brief defense of image veneration in the Roman Catholic Church. Ibid., p. 236.

form any degree of attachment to these is to deter spiritual advancement toward the knowledge of God out of Himself in the Word. John's words are simple but to the point on this matter:

The reason [that these images cannot serve as an adequate proximate means to God] is that the imagination cannot fashion or imagine anything beyond what it has experienced through the exterior senses, that is, seen with the eyes, heard with the ears, etc. At the most it can compose resemblances of these objects that are seen, heard, or felt. But such resemblances do not reach a greater entity nor even as much entity as that of other sense objects. Even though a person may imagine palaces of pearls and mountains of gold--for he has seen gold and pearls--all of this imagination will indeed be less than the essence of a little gold or of a pearl. And this, even though in the imagination there is a larger quantity and more excellent structure. Since all created things, as has been said, are unproportioned to God's being, all imaginings fashioned out of their similarities are incapable of serving as proximate means toward union with Him. Rather, as we said, they serve for much less.

Those who imagine God through some of these figures (as an imposing fire or as brightness, or through any other forms) and think that He is somewhat like them are very far from Him. These considerations, forms, and methods of meditation are necessary to beginners that the soul may be enamored and fed through the senses, as we shall point out later. They are suitable as the remote means to union with God, which beginners must ordinarily use for the attainment of their goal and the abode of spiritual repose. Yet these means must not be so used that a person always employs them and never advances, for then he would never achieve his goal, which is unlike the remote means and unproportioned to it--just as none of the steps on a flight of stairs has any resemblance to the goal at the top toward which they are the means. If a man in climbing them does not leave each one behind until there are no more, or if he should want to stay on one of them, he would never reach the level and peaceful room at the top.

Consequently, a man, who wants to arrive at union with the Supreme Repose and Good in this life, must climb all the steps, which are considerations, forms, and concepts, and leave them behind, since they are dissimilar and unproportioned to the goal toward which they lead. And this goal is God.<sup>1</sup>

The same warning is affirmed by John of the Cross against imaginative apprehensions which are represented supernaturally in the mind.<sup>2</sup> Like all other visions, images and imaginary representations of God in the mind, they mediate against the divine mode of auditive communication which is that "Faith cometh by hearing."<sup>3</sup> Or, as the Mystical Doctor states it:

In this high state of union God does not communicate Himself to the soul--nor is this possible--through the disguise of any imaginative vision, likeness, or figure, but mouth to mouth: the pure and naked essence of God (the mouth of God in love) with the pure and naked essence of the soul (the mouth of the soul in the love of God).<sup>4</sup>

This does not mean that God cannot use other means in preparing the soul to receive the divine knowledge of His Being. He takes each soul step by step to the "innermost good." The symbols and process that He employs depend on what He "judges expedient for the soul," and sometimes this requires that He use the "rind of sensible

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 12, iv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 16, vi-xv.

<sup>3</sup>Romans 10:17.

<sup>4</sup>Ascent, II, 16, ix.

things," to prepare the soul for union with Himself. Thus, "in the measure that a man approaches spirit in his dealings with God, he divests and empties himself of the ways of the senses, and of discursive and imaginative meditation."<sup>1</sup>

The goal of John's plea for total detachment from all mental images and self-conditioned concepts of God is to free the active intellect and nullify all confidence in it as a means for knowing God. All prior ideas of God, whether sensible, mental, or imaginary, must be brought into the complete subjection of pure faith in order that God's Word about Himself can be heard above them and not confused in any manner with them. John's purpose is to help the soul free itself of itself that it might be in full communion with the personal knowledge of God. In this aspect of his theology John is remarkably similar to the method of modern empirical science which functions in this objective manner to arrive at its a posteriori conclusions.

Faith, then, acts as a functioning force to bring about the necessary spiritual mortification that is necessary in the intellect if the pure knowledge of God's Being is to be experienced. Hope performs this function in the memory and love accomplishes it in man's will. No

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 17, iv and v.

true union with God is possible apart from the operations of these three spiritual virtues. They function in harmony because each of them involves a personal Being. They lead the soul to desire God for His own sake rather than for intellectual achievement, pride of memory, or force of will. Together they lead the soul in all its substance and faculties into such utter darkness and denudation of self-trust and self-pride that the full light of God's presence can burst in upon it. It is to a fuller understanding of this light and the function of faith in revealing it that the present study now turns.

Faith as Active and Passive in Relation to Divine Knowledge.

Faith, according to John of the Cross, is both active and passive.<sup>1</sup> It is active in the sense that it is the supernatural light of God which purges the soul of all that is not directly of God, for God, and from God. Unlike humanism, faith shows man both his limitations and the areas of his true abilities, and helps him, by the Light of God's Word, to darken his dependence on himself and his own abilities, as a means

---

<sup>1</sup>The Ascent of Mount Carmel deals with the active aspects of the theological virtues: faith, hope, and love. The Dark Night deals with the passive or infused aspects of these same virtues. Theologically, then, the treatises must be considered together, for to interpret one without the other is to lapse into a form of pelagianism on the one side, or to fall into a kind of determinism on the other. The fact that both works are commentaries on the identical poem requires this unified interpretation. In John's thinking they were meant to complement each other theologically and practically. (Cf. Ascent, I, 1, ii.) Trueman Dicken calls this active-passive relationship the "indispensable rallying point of the doctrine in both works." Op. cit., p. 218.



for knowing God. It points out the sensuality and selfishness in man which distort his vision of God, and it actively cancels out his own intellectual faculties as a mode in themselves of experiencing God. For John, faith in its active role is the utter darkness of complete obedient purgation that must be realized before the light of God's Being can dawn in one's experience.

But faith also has its passive aspect. It is only half understood when its purgative role is all that is comprehended. For "the living faith"<sup>1</sup> is "inspired wisdom,"<sup>2</sup> "deep contemplation,"<sup>3</sup> "illumination of the human intellect,"<sup>4</sup> and "a science of love."<sup>5</sup> What is complete "darkness" in the active night of purgation<sup>6</sup> is "light and wisdom" in the passive night of perfection. The active night of faith is obedient submission to divine purgation. The passive night of faith is obedient submission to divine infilling.

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, II, 15, i.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 17, viii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 17, i.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 13, xi.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 18, v.

<sup>6</sup>This is the general theme of the commentary on the Ascent of Mount Carmel, Books I, II, and III.

In the activity of "the night" (or period) when the soul is purified for union with God, the mind is purged of its light, the memory is divested of its discursive knowledge, and the will is denuded of its affections.<sup>1</sup> The purging of the light of the intellect involves John in a relationship problem between this light and the infused supernatural light of God's Being in the Soul. He, therefore, goes into a lengthy and valuable discussion of the two kinds of light: the light of natural reason, and the uncreated light of divine reason.

What, then, is the relationship of the greater Light of God to the lesser light of human reason? Another way to state the theological problem with which John is dealing is to ask the question: What concordance is there between the particular theological knowledge of man's reason and the "general loving knowledge of God"<sup>2</sup> which is passively infused in contemplation?

The working out of this relational problem requires a clear understanding of John's purpose. He is not a speculative philosopher describing the difference between discursive knowledge and inspired knowledge or giving an exposition of the various theological attributes of God's nature derived from dialectical reasoning. He is, instead,

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, II, 8, ii.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, II, 14, xii. "noticia amorosa general"

an empirical theologian describing the pathway to a personal encounter and union with God in His very Being. John would never say that discursive reasoning, and, specifically, scholasticism, is not good. Indeed, in his Prologue to the Spiritual Canticle he writes to the prioress of St. Joseph's Convent in Granada and says that:

Although some scholastic theology is used here in reference to the soul's interior converse with God, it will not prove vain to speak in such a manner to the pure of spirit. Even though Your Reverence lacks training in scholastic theology by which the divine truths are understood, you are not wanting in mystical theology which is known through love and by which one not only knows but at the same time experiences.<sup>1</sup>

No one can read the hundreds of pages of religious literature produced by John of the Cross without sensing his deep indebtedness to Scholasticism in particular and to discursive theological knowledge in general. But his empirical approach to the profound subject of an intuitional knowledge of God causes him to count all humanly acquired knowledge as a completely separate and distinct kind of cognition from that which relates to God's Person. The one is created light in the intellect and the other is the uncreated Light of God's personal revelation. The latter completely eclipses the former as a mode of divine knowledge, but the uncreated Light of God is not known (heard) until

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, Prologue, iii. (Author's underlining.)

man ceases to depend on the created light of discursive reasoning for the true knowledge of God.

Discursive knowledge is valuable to man in that it informs him about God and the divine mode of operation in creation, but this type of apprehension can never effect communion between God and man because, however perfect it may be, it is not the mode by which God gives Himself to man. The distinction that John of the Cross makes in these two types of knowledge--discursive and ontological, is decisive in his whole theological system. It is the heart of his doctrine in the sense that he calls in question every phase of human dependence on any light in man's experience which is not the uncreated Light of God Himself. Man, by nature, desires to know God out of his own light--his own reason and in his own way. But John of the Cross, while not disparaging reason as a necessary faculty in man's experience, teaches that its light must be blacked out as a means to knowing God out of His Being. All of man's wisdom, though valuable in its place, is of no avail in causing God to give Himself to man in communion. In fact, it can serve to incapacitate man from receiving the divine self-revelation.

The effect of the uncreated Light of God through contemplation upon the light of human reason is to darken it. Thus, according to

John of the Cross, the brighter and purer the Divine Light of Contemplation is, the darker the intellect becomes in self-dependence.

This darkening of the human faculties is not optional, but is an integral part of the self-giving of God to man in the experience of contemplation.

That the soul with its faculties be divinely tempered and prepared for the divine union of love, it must first be engulfed in this divine and dark spiritual light of contemplation, and thereby be withdrawn from all creature affections and apprehensions. The duration of this absorption is proportionate to the intensity of the contemplation. The more simply and purely the divine light strikes the soul, the more it darkens and empties and annihilates it in its particular apprehensions and affections concerning both earthly and heavenly things; and, also, the less simply and purely it shines, the less it deprives and darkens the soul.

It seems incredible that the brighter and purer the supernatural, divine light is, the darker it is for the soul; and that the less bright it is, the less dark it is to the soul. We can understand this truth clearly if we consider what we proved above from the teaching of the Philosopher: that the clearer and more evident supernatural things are in themselves, the darker they are to our intellects.<sup>1</sup>

To illustrate this matter, John uses the following significant analogy:

We observe that the more a ray of sunlight shining through a window is void of dust particles, the less clearly it is seen, and that it is perceived more clearly when there are more dust particles in the air. The reason is that the light in itself is invisible and is rather the means by which the objects it strikes are seen; but it is also seen when it reflects on

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, II, 8, ii.

them. Were the light not to strike these objects, it would not be seen and neither would they. As a result, if a ray of sunlight should enter through one window, traverse the room, and go out through another window without coming in contact with any object or dust particles on which it could reflect, the room would have no more light than previously, neither would the ray be visible. Instead, upon close observation one notes that there is more darkness where the ray is present, because it takes away and darkens some of the other light; and this ray is invisible as we said because there are no objects on which it can reflect.

This, precisely then, is what the divine ray of contemplation does. In striking the soul with its divine light, it surpasses the natural light and thereby darkens and deprives a man of all the natural affections and apprehensions he perceives by means of his natural light. It leaves an individual's spiritual and natural faculties not only in darkness, but in emptiness too. Leaving the soul thus empty and dark, the ray purges and illumines it with divine spiritual light, while the soul thinks it has no light and that it is in darkness, as illustrated in the case of the ray of sunlight which is invisible even in the middle of a room if the room is pure and void of any object on which the light may reflect. Yet when this spiritual light finds an object on which to shine, that is, when something is to be understood spiritually concerning perfection or imperfection, no matter how slight, or about a judgment on the truth or falsity of some matter, a man will understand more clearly than he did before he was in this darkness. And easily recognizing the imperfection which presents itself, a man grows conscious of the spiritual light he possesses; for the ray of light is dark and invisible until a hand or some other thing passes through it, and then both the object and the ray are recognized.

Since this light is so simple, so pure, and so general and is unaffected and unrestricted by any particular intelligible object, natural or divine, and since the faculties are empty and annihilated of all these apprehensions, the soul with

universality and great facility perceives and penetrates anything earthly or heavenly presented to it.<sup>1</sup>

The theological significance of this teaching by John of the Cross is related to epistemology and faith, for it is not an appended, or abridged, or amplified version of an already existing doctrine of God that is communicated in the contemplative experience. It is God Himself revealing Himself in the darkness of the purified soul as Pure Love and Pure Light. But even as the Light of lights that makes the light of all other stars appear quenched, God is not known by the efforts of man's reason and will. His presence is known only in faith by the emptiness it gives to all of one's spiritual faculties. The intellect is darkened, the memory is oblivious to what it has retained,<sup>2</sup> and the will is detached from its affection for all that is of the created order. But God in His purity causes His Being to be known in His

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, II, 8, iii-v. This analogy of uncreated light is also discussed in the Ascent, not as a part of the purgation process, but rather as its result. Its discussion in the Ascent is typical of John's tendency to anticipate the nature of his goal prior to its logical occurrence in the sequence of the poetry. E. g., Ascent, II, 14. This is a fortunate matter, however, for in the case of the Ascent and Dark Night commentaries, neither of them was ever half completed. Cf. also Ascent, II, 14, ix and x.

<sup>2</sup>Dicken modernizes this effect on the memory and interprets it as the release from worry. Op. cit., p. 261.

Word, Jesus Christ, and where there is emptiness of self there is purity of hearing which, like the pure light that comes through the room, cannot be seen. But, unlike the light, God in His Word can be heard.<sup>1</sup> John cites examples of this from the Old Testament.

The first of these is from the experience of the Children of Israel at Mount Horeb where the mountain burned with fire and was surrounded with "darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice."<sup>2</sup> John interprets the darkness, clouds, and obscurity to be that "vague, dark knowledge in which the soul is united with God."<sup>3</sup> He then goes on to quote a subsequent line of Scripture from the same passage: "Ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire." (Deuteronomy 4:15) Thus, the

---

<sup>1</sup>The relationship of the spiritual presence of Christ as the mediator of the divine Being and Word is found more dramatically presented in the Spiritual Canticle and the poem Living Flame of Love. However, the idea that God communicates Himself through hearing rather than by sight is verified in the Ascent and Dark Night by the Scriptures John uses in support of the pure contemplation versus "visions" passages. Cf. esp. Ascent, II, 16, and Night, II, 9.

<sup>2</sup>Deuteronomy 4:11-12. Ascent, II, 16, viii.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.



darkness is present and the light is present, but the hearing faculty of the soul is the mode by which God more truly revealed Himself.

Another Old Testament example is the occasion when Aaron and Miriam murmured against the leadership of Moses. God reproves them by declaring that He has placed His highest stamp of approval on Moses, not by a vision or a dream that is seen with the mind's eye, but through the personal communion of dialogue.

Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, by his use of Scripture and with the analogy to light, John shows that the mode of communication for faith is submissive hearing rather than optical forms. Of course, underlying this epistemological teaching is his soteriological emphasis that the purer the soul into which the Light of God's Being shines, the greater will be the dialogical communion of this most personal of all experiences. But, it is a communion of hearing God as Love and Wisdom rather than seeing Him in form or vision.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>The Spiritual Canticle and its commentary by John illustrate this communion dialogue.

Faith and Reason Related to Divine Knowledge. Another aspect of John's doctrine of faith which requires noting, is its relation to reason in the attainment of divine knowledge. This problem has been alluded to many times in the present study, but, to avoid a misunderstanding of the relationship between these two modes of acquiring knowledge in the Mystical Doctor's theology, a review of the salient factors is pertinent.

The nature of the question is the place (or lack of place) that John of the Cross gives to reason in his theological empiricism. Does the Mystical Doctor teach an irrational theology, or does he advocate some type of blind leap of reason to arrive at true union with God? The questions are important, for too often Christian mystics have not been granted sufficient consideration in the mainstream of Christian theology because they were believed to be sub-rational or irrational in their approach. And, it must be admitted, at times their claims of intuitive perception of God have circumvented the role of the Word, and thus plunged them into a pneumatology which is irrational in content and mode.

In the case of John of the Cross, the question hinges on the nature of reason, the sources which affect its development, and the role of reason with regard to the knowledge of the supernatural which

John claims to have experienced. If reason is simply thinking coherently and being able to deduce conclusions from known facts, it can be documented that John used the term in this limited sense.<sup>1</sup> But the problem is greater than simple definition and the discovery of examples to prove or disprove adherence to it in John's writings. His purpose is to lead his followers into an experience with Divine Being, rather than merely to present them with a well-ordered doctrine of the divine nature and attributes. How, then, can an ordinary concept of reason serve to qualify and order personal communion, especially when one of the persons is greater than all human reason and logic?

Reason in the scholastic sense of John's day was more of a cognitive process arising from and limited by the rational and conceptual forms acquired through observation of the natural world. It was a correlation activity of the mind in which the sensible objects of the visible and tangible world are transformed into images, forms, and precepts. Manifestly, then, it leaned heavily on sense perception in general, and on optical perception in particular, whereas John of the Cross is more concerned with intuitive perception in general and with audition.

In this connection he quotes and interprets Habakkuk as saying:

---

<sup>1</sup>E. g., Ascent, II, I, iii; 22, ix. Silverio, op.cit., pp. 82, 180.

In order to hear God, a person should stand firm and be detached in his sense life and affections, as the prophet himself declares: "I will stand upon my watch (with detached appetite) and will fix my foot (I will not mediate with the sensory faculties) in order to contemplate (understand) what God says to me." (Hb. 2:1)<sup>1</sup>

In other words, John's emphasis at this point is more Hebraic than Greek, in that he seeks to lead his readers away from the current dependence on ocular concepts of form and reality so prominent in the Hellenistic philosophy that overflowed into the theology of Western Christianity. To accomplish this, the Mystical Doctor de-emphasized the need of reason as a mode of acquisition for divine knowledge, but stresses in its place the superiority of faith as the divinely ordained mode which God employs in revealing Himself. Reason gives man a knowledge about God, but faith is superior in that it establishes a dialogical relationship with God, a "state of listening", which John calls contemplation.<sup>2</sup>

In contemplation God teaches the soul very quietly and secretly, without its knowing how, without the sound of words, and without the help of any bodily or spiritual faculty, in silence and quietude, in darkness to all sensory and natural things. Some spiritual persons call this contemplation knowing by unknowing. For this knowledge is

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, I, 12, v. (Author's underlining.)

<sup>2</sup>Flame, 3, xxv.

not produced by the intellect which the philosophers call the active intellect, which works upon the forms, phantasies, and apprehensions of the corporal faculties; rather it is produced in the possible or passive intellect. This possible intellect, without the reception of these forms, etc., receives passively only substantial knowledge, which is divested of images and given without any work or active function of the intellect.<sup>1</sup>

It would be erroneous to conclude, then, that John of the Cross advocates an experience in which knowledge is mediated either sub-rationally, irrationally, or extra-rationally. The first of these alternatives is valueless in that its source would be pure subjectivism, and therefore incapable of leading to experience with God. Extra-rationally is the criticism justly leveled at the mysticism which seeks to separate truth from the reality of the senses and thereby lapses into a docetic type of truth which is both impractical and actually non-existent. Irrational mysticism, on the other hand, is fully aware of the senses and the tangible world, but quite irrationally leaps blindly from this knowledge into the unreal world of phantasy, visions, locutions, etc. John of the Cross dedicates scores of pages in his theology to combating this school of mysticism which to him appears false and worthless, as indeed it is for all of theology.

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 39, xii.

Thus, far from advocating a separation of faith and reason, John appeals for a faith that is guided by true reason and yet transcends it. A passage from the Ascent is especially relevant at this point. John discusses in the Second Book of the Ascent the lack of necessity to petition God for guidance which is radiated through supernatural means (visions, revelations, etc.) and, as evidence that this is not God's primary mode of revealing His will, he cites the case of Jethro when he advised his son-in-law to select other judges as helpers so that the people with legal problems would not have to wait for Moses' personal consideration. In Exodus 18:13-23 he comments on this incident by saying:

God approved this advice, but He did not give it, because human reason and judgment were sufficient means for solving this problem. Usually God does not manifest such matters through visions, revelations, and locutions, because He is ever desirous that man insofar as possible take advantage of his own reasoning powers. All matters must be regulated by reason save those of faith, which though not contrary to reason transcend it. <sup>1</sup>

In this same regard, John quotes St. Gregory as saying that faith is without merit when it has experienced proof from human reason:

"Nec fides habet meritum cui humana ratio prabet experimentum."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ascent, II, 22, xiii. Silverio, op. cit., p. 183. Kavanaugh, op. cit., p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., III, 31, viii from Gregory: Hom. 26 in Evang. PL 76, 1197.

The "experienced proof" of reason is sensible or discursive verification which simply is incapable of proving or disproving the reality of one's union (or lack of union) with God.

However, John affirms that God honors man's "reason by drawing near to those who come together to know truth"<sup>1</sup> and the Holy Spirit withdraws Himself "from thoughts that are without reason."<sup>2</sup> Also, everything that might be given us as supernatural truth should be accepted only when it:

. . . is in harmony with reason and the Gospel law. And then we should receive this truth, not because it is privately revealed to us, but because it is reasonable, and we should brush aside all feeling pertinent to the revelation. We ought, in fact, to consider and examine the reasonableness of the truth when it is revealed even more than when it is not, since the devil in order to delude souls says much that is true, conformed to reason, and that will come to pass.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to these functions of reason, St. John declares that Divine Union requires the assent of both faith and reason to be effective<sup>4</sup> and one should be "attentive to reason in order to do what it (reason) says concerning the way to God."<sup>5</sup> Christian conduct also should be "prompted by reason" rather than by pleasure.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 22, xi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., III, 6, iii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 21, iv. (Author's underlining.)

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 26, xi.

<sup>5</sup>Avisos y Sentencias, 41, Silverio, op. cit., p. 747.

<sup>6</sup>Night, I, 6, vi.

Beyond these specific teachings regarding reason, John refers to it in an oblique manner in the sections of the Ascent where he discusses the purgation of the will. This is significant since these chapters deal primarily with the emotions (and not the intellect) as they relate to the Divine Union experience. The emotions are called aficciones or pasioness and are four in number: joy, hope, sorrow, and fear.<sup>1</sup> Joy that springs from sensory goods (such as those derived from sight, hearing, smell, etc.) can "obscure reason,"<sup>2</sup> and "debilitate it,"<sup>3</sup> while joy over moral goods (such as the practice of good works) tends to crowd the judgment of reason.<sup>4</sup> Natural goods (such as beauty, grace, and other corporal endowments) also cause joy, but this joy itself can "cloud reason and judgment" and result in their "dullness and ineffectiveness."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, sensible knowledge should be tested and ordered by reason for, according to John of the Cross, all that Adam and Eve saw, spoke of, and ate in the garden "served them for more abundant delight in contemplation, since the sensory part of their

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, III, 16, ii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., III, 25, i.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., III, 25, vi.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., III, 29, ii.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., III, 22, ii.



souls was truly subjected and ordered to reason. He whose sense is purged of sensible objects and ordered to reason from the first movements procures the delight of savorous contemplation and awareness of God."<sup>1</sup>

To summarize, then, the role of reason in John's theology is primarily to determine action and thought in all matters of experience except those beyond its capabilities, namely, the self-revelation of God's Being which is controlled by the sovereign grace of God and given to man only through the mode of faith. It is not that John degrades the function of human reason, for his own academic background and his literary output combine with his explicit statements to disprove this notion. When it appears that he is not appreciative of human reason, it is only because he thinks in terms of the active and passive intellect, and does not always specify their distinctive functions. The active intellect produces ideas and concepts about God which are not necessarily evil in themselves but which can become a serious obstacle to God's self revelation if they are relied upon as being the ultimate in divine knowledge. But it must be remembered that it is precisely to the intellect (and to the will) that God reveals Himself through faith. Thus, far from being an irrational or extra-rational or sub-rational

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 26, v.

revelation which God sends through faith, it is the most rational of all truths, and therefore can be readily assimilated in man's passive intellect as reasonable and of inestimable value. The active intellect is the productive aspect in John's apprehension faculties and the passive intellect has an assimilative function. While man produces in the active intellect his own idea of God, the passive intellect cannot receive the divine knowledge through faith. But, once the active intellect is completely stilled with regard to producing conceptualized ideas and images of God, the passive intellect can then "hear," "receive," and assimilate the Word of God which comes from beyond the productive processes of man's mind. Faith, then, transcends reason in its production of an ontological knowledge of God, but it reveals God to the reason because rationality is of the very nature and essence of God. Faith and reason are both indispensable aspects of the epistemological process in John of the Cross, for by them God effects His divine union with man in love and wisdom. Faith darkens the active intellect in order to infuse the passive intellect with the uncreated Light of God's presence and thereby illumines the whole intellect with the "loving knowledge" of God.

### The Source and Ground of Faith

The origin of faith and its theological basis require brief analysis, since this doctrine exercises such a foundational function to all of John's theology. Is faith a human attitude toward God, or is it a divine virtue infused by God? Or, is it a cooperative relationship of human and divine faith? And how is it grounded? Is its basis the goodness and worth of man, or is it grounded in God's relationship to the whole created order? These and other inquiries are relevant to an understanding of the doctrines of contemplation and divine union which naturally emerge from St. John's concept of faith.

The Divine Source and Cause of Faith. The epistemological faith which reveals God intuitively to man proceeds from God Himself as the Divine Repository and Causal Agent. Thus, the nature of faith in the ontological knowledge of God is as distinct from natural faith as the knowledge itself. Mystical faith is a "divine gift" which "God grants naturally or supernaturally to whomsoever He wills."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, like hope and love, it is infused directly by God without

---

<sup>1</sup> Ascent II, 25, xii. As a Biblical example of a "naturally" imparted gift, John cites the case of Balaam, and for a supernatural example he lists the "holy prophets, apostles, and other saints."

any intermediate means,<sup>1</sup> because God Himself "is the substance and concept of faith." (Dios es la sustancia de la fe y el concepto de ella.<sup>2</sup>)

The Role of the Incarnation in Faith. Significantly, the faith which John teaches as the proportionate means for man's union with God is incarnational in character and content. The Mystical Doctor does not proclaim an abstract kind of faith so common to mysticism in general, nor is it the Spirit and Father-directed faith which Eastern Christianity propounds. It is a faith rooted, centered, and fulfilled in the life and obedience of the Son and related to all of creation through His incarnation.

. . . now that the faith is established through Christ and the Gospel law made manifest in this era of grace, there is no reason for inquiring of Him in this way, or expecting Him to answer as before. In giving us His Son, His only Word (for He possesses no other), He spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word--and He has no more to say.<sup>3</sup>

This idea is further expressed in John's commentary on the divine commendation of the Son following His transfiguration experience as recorded in Matthew 17.

. . . God could respond as follows: If I have already told you all things in My Word, My Son, and if I have no other word, what answer or revelation can I now make that would surpass this? Fasten your eyes on Him alone, because in

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 32, iv; and Canticle 26, viii.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle 1, x.

<sup>3</sup>Ascent II, 22, iii.

Him I have spoken and revealed all, and in Him you shall discover even more than you ask for and desire. You are making an appeal for locutions and revelations that are incomplete, but if you turn your eyes to Him you will find them complete. For He is My entire locution and response, vision and revelation, which I have already spoken, answered, manifested, and revealed to you, by giving Him to you as a brother, companion, master, ransom, and reward. Since that day when I descended upon Him with My Spirit on Mount Tabor proclaiming: Hic est filius meus dilectus in quo mihi bene complacui, ipsum audite (This is my Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased, hear Him) [Mt. 17:5], I have relinquished these methods of answering and teaching, and presented them to Him. Hear Him because I have no more faith to reveal nor truths to manifest. If I spoke before, it was to promise Christ; if they questioned Me, their inquiries were related to their petitions and longings for Christ in Whom they were to obtain every good (as is evidenced in all the doctrine of the Evangelists and Apostles). But now anyone asking Me in that way and desiring that I speak and reveal faith, yet he would be failing in faith, because Christ has already been given. Accordingly, he would offend My Beloved Son deeply, because he would not merely be lacking faith in Him, but obliging Him to become incarnate and undergo His life and death again. You shall not find anything to ask or desire through revelations and visions; behold Him well, for in Him you will uncover all these revelations already made, and many more.<sup>1</sup>

Thus faith is both established and fulfilled in the Son. There is no experience or knowledge of God which supercedes or excels the revelation of God in Christ, for in it are heard and seen the Infinite Voice and Eternal Light, which became the Incarnate Word and Truth at Bethlehem.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 22, v. (Author's underlining.)

For, since He [God] has finished revealing the faith through Christ, there is no more faith to reveal, nor will there ever be. Anyone wanting to get something in a supernatural way, as we stated, would as it were be accusing God of not having given us in His Son all that is required. Although in such endeavors one presupposes the faith and believes in it, still, one's curiosity displays a lack of faith. Hence there is no reason to hope for doctrine or anything else through supernatural means.<sup>1</sup>

The Incarnation is also the content of faith in the Divine-human union, for in addressing the soul regarding the conduct which leads to the discovery of Christ, John says:

. . . seek Him in faith and love, without desire for the satisfaction, taste, or understanding of any other thing than what you ought to know. Faith and love are like the blind man's guides. They will lead you along a path unknown to you, to the place where God is hidden. Faith, the secret we mentioned, is comparable to the feet by which one journeys to God, and love is like one's guide. In dealing with these mysteries and secrets of faith, the soul will merit through love the discovery of the content of faith, that is, the Bridegroom Whom she desires to possess in this life through the special grace of divine union with God, as we said, and in the next through the essential glory, by which she will rejoice in Him not in a hidden way, but face to face.<sup>2</sup>

The ontological experience of God through faith is an awareness of the incarnate and glorified Logos in John's theology. Thus he speaks of the Son of God as the Word that reaches him in the "divine touches" and union.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 22, vii. (Author's underlining.)

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, I, xi. (Author's underlining.)

O You, then . . . the Word, the Son of God, through the delicacy of Your divine being, You subtly penetrate the substance of my soul and, lightly touching it all, absorb it entirely in Yourself in divine modes of delights and sweetnesses . . . O gentle breeze, since You are a delicate and mild breeze, tell us: How do You, the Word, the Son of God, touch mildly and gently, since You are so awesome and mighty? <sup>1</sup>

The Word is immensely subtle and delicate, for He is the touch which comes into contact with the soul. The soul is the vessel having breadth and capacity because of its remarkable purity and refinement in this state.

O, then, delicate touch, the more abundantly You pervade my soul, the more substantial You are and the purer is my soul!

It should also be known that the more subtle and delicate the touch, and the more delight and gratification it communicates there where it touches, the less volume and bulk it has. This divine touch has no bulk or volume, because the Word, who grants it is alien to every mode and manner, and free from all the volume of form, figure, and accident which usually encircles and imposes boundaries or limits to the substance. This touch we are discussing is indescribable insofar as it is substantial, that is from the divine substance. Finally, then, O Word, indescribably delicate touch, produced in the soul only by Your most simple being, which, since it is infinite, is infinitely delicate and hence touches so subtly, lovingly, eminently, and delicately! <sup>2</sup>

Faith in the Incarnation and love for the Incarnation are both taught by John as integral elements in the epistemological relation which God effects in the soul through uniting it with Himself.

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 2, xvii. (Author's underlining.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2, xix. (Author's underlining.)

This . . . is produced in the soul by knowledge of the Incarnation of the Word and of the mysteries of faith. Since these are more remarkable works of God, embodying in themselves a greater love than that shown forth in creatures, they produce in the soul a more intense love. . . . Speaking of this . . . the Bridegroom says: You have wounded my heart, my sister, with one of your eyes and with one hair of your neck. [Ct. 4:9] The eye refers to faith in the Incarnation of the Bridegroom, and the hair signifies love for this very Incarnation.<sup>1</sup>

The whole of Creation is also related to the Logos in John's theology and this hidden relationship is revealed through faith as a part of the mysteries of eternity. In explaining this, John says:

God created all things with remarkable ease and brevity, and in them He left some trace of Who He is, not only in giving all things being from nothing, but even by endowing them with innumerable graces and qualities, making them beautiful in a wonderful order and unfailing dependence on one another. All of this He did through His own Wisdom, the Word, His only begotten Son by Whom He created them. . . . Creatures are the lesser works of God, because He made them as though in passing. The greater works, in which He manifested Himself more and to which He gave greater attention, were those of the Incarnation of the Word and the mysteries of the Christian faith. Compared to these, all the others were done as though in passing and with haste. . . .

St. Paul says: The Son of God is the Splendor of His glory and the image of His substance. [Heb. 1:3] It should be known that only with this figure, His Son, did God look at all things, that is, He communicated to them their natural being and many natural graces and gifts,

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 7, iii.



and made them complete and perfect, as is said in Genesis: God looked at all things that He made, and they were very good. [Gn. 1:31] To look and behold that they were very good was to make them very good in the Word, His Son.

Not only by looking at them did He communicate natural being and graces, as we said, but also with this image of His Son alone, He clothed them in beauty by imparting to them supernatural being. This He did when He became man and elevated human nature in the beauty of God and consequently all creatures, since in human nature He was united with them all. Accordingly, the Son of God proclaimed: If I be lifted up from the earth, I will elevate all things to Me. [Jn. 12:32] And in this elevation of all things through the Incarnation of His Son and through the glory of His resurrection according to the flesh, the Father did not merely beautify creatures partially, but rather we can say, clothed them wholly in beauty and dignity.<sup>1</sup>

. . . God will undoubtedly give you what He also promises further on through Isaias: I shall give you hidden treasures and reveal to you the substance and mysteries of secrets. [Is. 45:3] The substance of the secrets is God Himself, for God is the substance and concept of faith, and faith is the secret and the mystery. And when that which faith covers and hides from us is revealed--that perfect vision of God spoken of by St. Paul [1 Cor. 13:10]--then the substance and mysteries of the secrets will be uncovered to the soul.<sup>2</sup>

From these examples, it can be noted that the faith of which John speaks in his empirical knowledge of God out of His being is a Christocentric faith which in no way circumvents the scriptural emphasis on the Incarnate Son as its Object and Content. This

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5, i, iii, & iv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1, x.

knowledge is realized both presently and eschatologically, and thus can be known perfectly only in the life to come. To illustrate both the hidden and revealed aspects of faith through the Incarnate Christ, John cites again the experience of Moses when God hid him in the cleft of the rock and passed by without permitting him to see His face.

However much the soul hides herself, she will never in this mortal life attain to so perfect a knowledge of these mysteries as she will possess in the next. Nevertheless, if like Moses she hides herself in the cleft of the rock (in real imitation of the perfect life of the Son of God, her Bridegroom), she will merit that, while God protects her with His right hand, He will show her His shoulders [Ex. 33:22-23], that is, He will bring her to the high perfection of union with the Son of God, her Spouse, and transformation in Him through love.<sup>1</sup>

When Moses asked God to reveal His glory, God told Moses that he would be unable to receive such a revelation in this life, but that he would be shown all good, that is all the good revealable in this life. So God put Moses in the cavern of the rock, which is Christ, as we said, and showed His back to him, which was to impart knowledge of the mysteries of the humanity of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the revelation of God in Christ through empirical faith in the present is immediate and superior to all other knowledge, but in comparison to the perfect revelation which will be realized in the beatific life, it is only a foretaste. But whether in the present or in the eschaton, the divine knowledge which is imparted by God out of

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1, x.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 37, iv.

Himself is Incarnational in content, trinitarian in its revelational mode, and grounded in the sovereign grace of Divine Love.

Faith as Grounded in Divine Sovereign Grace.<sup>1</sup> The "truths of faith" which manifest the grace of God in Christ find their provocation in the wisdom and merciful love of God called "grace."<sup>2</sup> Historically this grace was demonstrated in the Incarnation<sup>3</sup> and in the cross,<sup>4</sup> but, as the perfecting presence of God in His children, grace "grows,"<sup>5</sup> "superabounds,"<sup>6</sup> and augments in stages according to the "soul's pace"<sup>7</sup> in "desire and love."<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>John's doctrine of grace is not entirely free from his Scholasticism environment. Thus he can speak almost quantitatively of grace when referring to the sacraments (cf. Night, I, 6, v; and Canticle 23, vi) and the word is found in the plural form without a clear distinction between "divine grace" and the "graces of Christ" in the dialogue between the bride and bridegroom (e. g., Canticle 7, v, and vii; 22, iii). However, this influence is not extremely detrimental to his theology primarily because in his personal and unitive epistemology the place of authority shifts from the human interpreter of truth (whether individual or corporate) to God, the Source of Truth. Grace thus becomes more an ontological part of God's nature and therefore sovereignly ordered by His own wisdom and love, rather than being simply an impersonal power of God which can be controlled or dispensed by men, even if they are divinely chosen ministers.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 7, vii.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 23, iii and vi.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 33, vi-vii.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 38, iii.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 23, vi.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 13, xii.

But there is not the slightest hint of pelagianism in John's doctrine of grace, for it is what might be called the "reflective" or "circular" movement of God's essence in the soul in order to fit it for participation in His incarnate divinity.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in Christ, God looks upon the soul in grace, and, by doing so, imparts grace to it.

By infusing His grace in the soul, God makes it worthy and capable of His love. This verse, then, is like saying: Because You have infused Your grace into me, which was a worthy token of Your love, You loved me ardently, that is, You gave me more grace on this account. St. John makes the same affirmation: "He gives grace for the grace He has given" (Jn. 1:16), which is to give more. Without His grace one cannot merit His grace.<sup>2</sup>

The grace of God infused out of the very Being (love) of God is the only basis, then, for the faith and love which the soul gives back to God. By giving Himself in ontological grace, God makes the soul reflect and absorb His own likeness and establishes the incarnational cycle of "grace for grace" in the soul. Accordingly, as "God beholds the soul made more attractive through grace, He is impelled to grant her more grace, for He dwells within her and is well pleased with her."<sup>3</sup> If the soul previously received God's grace while in "the

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 32, iv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 32, v.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 33, vii.

ugliness of its fault and the inferiority of its nature,"<sup>1</sup> how much more will it be a recipient of His grace now that He has "arrayed it in His grace and clothed it in His beauty" which is Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Also, the operations or works of the soul acquire effectiveness and meaningful value because through the Son they are "elevated" and "adorned in the grace of God."<sup>3</sup> In this sense, and only in this sense, can the soul "perform works worthy of His [God's] grace and love," for otherwise such works would "wither [like flowers] and become valueless in God's sight, even though they be perfect from a human standpoint."<sup>4</sup>

Thus, in summary, Grace, as God's eternal "yes" to the soul, enables it to respond with its infused "yes" of faith, which is the means by which the spiritual espousal is effected between the Soul and the Incarnate Word.<sup>5</sup> Faith, then, is grounded in God's sovereignty and is accordingly ordered by His wisdom, mercy, and love. These three ontological elements in God's nature which ultimately cause the divine union experience are combined in St. John's theology to be God's redeeming and perfective grace.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 33, liii.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 32, viii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 30, viii.

<sup>5</sup>Flame, 3, xxiv.

As faith is worked out in human experience it has no greater proportionate mode of expression than the worship of God. Thus, in its daily habitual operation John calls it "infused contemplation" and, in the effect that it causes in the soul, the result is spiritual sanctification and perfection. It is to this contemplative worship of God in faith and its perfective effects in the soul that the present study now turns.

### PART III

#### THE DOCTRINE OF EMPIRICAL CONTEMPLATION

Dom Cuthbert Butler in his study of Western (i. e., Roman Catholic) mysticism states that John of the Cross "is coming more and more to be accepted by all schools as the great exponent of the realms of prayer contemplation and mystical theology,"<sup>1</sup> and Butler's own reliance on John's doctrine of contemplation proves his personal esteem for the Carmelite's teachings on this subject. No one can read John of the Cross without concluding two things: (1) that the singular purpose of his writing is to lead souls into the experience of perfection and union with God, and (2) that the method he proposes for effecting this ontological perfection is the practice of empirical contemplation.<sup>2</sup> In John's theology, the journey by which the ascent of Mount Carmel is made is contemplation. The dark night of the soul is the night of contemplation. The spiritual canticle is basically the

---

<sup>1</sup>Dom Cuthbert Butler, Western Mysticism (London: Arrow Books), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>The term "empirical contemplation" is used to relate John's contemplative method to his whole theological method in general, and, to contrast his concept of contemplation with the rationalistic and irrationalistic presentations of this doctrine.

bride and bridegroom's song of dialogical contemplation. The living flame of love in the book by that title, is the purifying flame of the Holy Spirit who transforms contemplation into the sublime experience of union with God. It behooves any study of St. John of the Cross to thoroughly master this integral aspect of his theology.

## I. The Nature and Context of Empirical Contemplation

### Definitions of Contemplation

There is no lack of material in John of the Cross concerning the meaning he gives to contemplation, for he defines it in all his major works. In the Ascent he calls it ". . . the general knowledge in which the spiritual faculties--memory, intellect, and will--are actuated and united in . . . passive, prepared knowledge."<sup>1</sup> In the Dark Night his definition gives greater prominence to the divine element of contemplation, for he states that it is "nothing else than a secret and peaceful and loving inflow of God, which, if not hampered, fires the soul in the spirit of love."<sup>2</sup> This spirit of love in contemplation is also called the "science of love" that is an infused loving knowledge, which both illumines and enamors the soul, elevating it

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 14, vi.

<sup>2</sup>Night, I, 10, vi.



step by step unto God, its Creator."<sup>1</sup> In the Spiritual Canticle he adds that contemplation is "also termed mystical theology, meaning the secret or hidden knowledge of God."<sup>2</sup> Such supernatural knowledge received in contemplation is not produced by the "agent intellect," which works upon the forms, phantasies, and apprehensions of the corporal faculties, but it is produced in the "passive intellect" which, without the reception of these forms, etc., "receives passively only substantial knowledge, which is divested of images and given without any work or active function of the intellect."<sup>3</sup>

The Diving Flame is John's briefest major work, and in it he gives his most succinct explanation of contemplation. It is simply: "receiving what God communicates."<sup>4</sup> Gathering these definitions together and noting their principle ideas, contemplation in John's writing is: (a) supernatural knowledge, (b) God and love, (c) intellectual passivity, and (d) the reception of divine communication. The conclusion is apparent, then, that John has not told us so much about the nature of contemplation as he has described its effects. There is a practical reason for this which will be noted subsequently.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 18, v.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 39, xii.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Flame, 3, xxxvi.

The Meditational Context of Contemplation

The nature of contemplation in John's theology is best understood not by definition but in its various levels of exercise, including the preparatory or pre-contemplative stage which he calls "discursive meditation." His idea of contemplation is purely theoretical if it is not seen in the context of disciplined meditation on the beginning end and the unitive experience with God on the other. The "acts of purgation," the "self denying habit," and the "discursive reflection" of those beginning the journey toward union with God are the foundation stones on which the "ladder" of contemplation rests. Of these beginners John says:

A person in this state should be given matter for meditation and discursive reflection, and he should by himself make interior acts and profit in spiritual things from the delight and satisfaction of the senses. For by being fed with the relish of spiritual things, the appetite is torn away from sensual things and weakened in regard to the things of the world.

But when the appetite has been fed somewhat, and has become in a certain fashion accustomed to spiritual things, and has acquired some fortitude and constancy, God begins to wean the soul, as they say, and place it in the state of contemplation. This occurs in some persons after a very short time, especially with religious, for in denying the things of the world more quickly, they accommodate their senses and appetites to God and, in their activity, pass on to the spirit which God works in them. This happens when the soul's discursive acts and meditations cease, as well as its initial sensible satisfaction and fervor, and it is

unable to practice discursive meditation as before, or find any support for the senses. The sensory part is left in dryness because its riches are transferred to the spirit, which does not pertain to the senses.<sup>1</sup>

The meditative period, then, is the indispensable and preparatory discipline which precedes the more passive period called contemplation. The beginner "acquires some knowledge and love of God"<sup>2</sup> and learns to control the senses, the appetites, and the other faculties of his being, both physical and spiritual, having to do with the senses. It is a time of discipline, purgation, and of bringing into subjection everything sensory that would inhibit the unlimited working of God's Spirit in the soul. This discipline, purgation, and submission include even those objects related to religion that might be held in the affection or stand in any type of competition to God's spiritual nature.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3, xxxii. John of the Cross makes a clear distinction between "beginners" and "proficients," which has not always been noted in the studies about his theology. In beginning the study of the Dark Night, he says: "Souls begin to enter this dark night when God, gradually drawing them out of the state of beginners (those who practice meditation on the spiritual road), begins to place them in the state of proficients (those who are already contemplatives) so that by passing through this state they might reach that of the perfect, which is the divine union of the soul with God." Night, I, 1, i.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, II, 14, ii.

John spells out all this to mean images, palpable or imaginary, visions, and any desire for special revelations or supernatural locutions. It also means a critical self-examination about motives, affections, modes of thought, preconceptions, and all aspects of one's daily life and the deepest operations of the soul. Contemplation toward divine union cannot begin without this type of meditation as its basis. It is a meditation of interior prayer and periods of personal introspection into one's entire moral and religious experience.

John designates this meditative state as a "night," but he explains that it is the early part of the night, for it deals primarily with the sensory aspects of one's physical and spiritual natures. The darker parts of the night, the midnight period, is the night of the contemplation when the inner person is purified in preparation for union with God. It is only for "proficients," while the earlier part of the disciplinary night is what John calls: "the lot of beginners." In it "God commences to introduce them (the beginners) into the state of contemplation."<sup>1</sup>

In the introductory period of meditation it is permissible and fitting for beginners:

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, I, iii.

to find some sensible gratification and satisfaction in the use of images, oratories, and other visible objects of devotion so that with this pleasure they may renounce worldly things from whose taste they are not yet weaned or detached. . . .

But in order to advance, the spiritual person should likewise divest himself of all these satisfactions and appetites, for the pure spirit is bound to none of these objects, but turns only to interior recollection and mental communion with God. Although he derives profit from images and oratories, this is very transitory, for his spirit is immediately elevated to God in forgetfulness of all sensory objects.<sup>1</sup>

The same forgetfulness applies to the interior bodily senses,

or what John calls "the imagination and the phantasy." He says:

Meditation is the work of these two faculties, since it is a discursive act built upon forms, figures, and images, imagined and fashioned by these senses. For example: the imagining of Christ crucified, or at the column, or in some other scene; or of God seated upon a throne with resplendent majesty; or the imagining and considering of glory as a beautiful light, etc.; or the picturing of any other human or divine object imaginable.

The soul will have to empty itself of these images and leave this sense in darkness if it is to reach divine union. For these images, just like the corporal objects of the exterior senses, cannot be an adequate, proximate mean to God.<sup>2</sup>

This activity of calling into question all of one's imaginary and conceptual forms of God is basically the key to understanding

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 39, i.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 12, iii.

John's doctrine of meditation. It is not a meditative period centered in Scripture study only, nor is it simply a time of "reflection upon the mysteries of the Faith," as Bede Frost contends.<sup>1</sup> It is a meditation exercise in self-denial and in the crucifixion of sensual and fleshly desires that in any way inhibit the indwelling presence of God in the soul. It is a mortification of the spiritual appetites such as the hunger for supernatural visions of saints, of angels, of light, of heaven's splendors, etc., the thirst for special revelations, divine locutions, angelic sounds, and the craving for delightful "feelings" during the fulfillment of religious rites. In other words, what John of the Cross seeks to do by advocating discursive meditation for the "beginners" on the journey to divine union is to vacate the soul of all sinful dependence on preconceived images and ideas of God. The joys of these persons are found in penances which to them are "pleasures," for "their fasts, instead of being a hardship, are happinesses," and the sacraments are their "consolations."<sup>2</sup>

Beginners, in these stages prior to actual contemplation, suffer from the usual imperfections of human nature called the "seven capital vices," namely, pride, avarice, lust, anger, gluttony, envy

---

<sup>1</sup>Frost, op. cit., p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Night, I, 1, iii.

and sloth.<sup>1</sup> Meditation means ferreting out of the soul every remnant of these degrading sins, but in reality it is God who, in the final analysis, does this work of spiritual purification.

No matter how much an individual does through his own efforts, he cannot actively purify himself enough to be disposed in the least degree for the divine union of the perfection of love. God must take over and purge him in that fire that is dark for him.<sup>2</sup>

Meditation, then, represents the dual activity of "the soul's own efforts to empty itself insofar as it can,"<sup>3</sup> and the work of God based on an attitude of submissive faith. The Holy Spirit does not purge and purify the soul apart from the introspection, confession, and abandonment of sin that is necessary on the part of these who are experiencing the "dark night of faith," but as these essential changes in attitude (repentance) become habitualized, God effects the purgation and purification (sanctification) that is indispensable for His subsequent union with the soul.

#### The Transition to the Divine Mode of Thought

The transition from the meditative period of spiritual preparation to the contemplative stage is as definite in the thinking of John

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, 2-7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 3, iii.

<sup>3</sup>Ascent, II, 4, ii.

of the Cross as the two periods themselves. The advance from simple meditation to contemplation begins when "everything seems to be functioning in reverse," that is, when the soul is in greatest darkness and dryness and when it feels the weakest:

Since the conduct of these beginners in the way of God is lowly and not too distant from love of pleasure and of self, as was explained, God desires to withdraw them from this base manner of loving and lead them on to a higher degree of divine love. And He desires to liberate them from the lowly exercise of the senses and of discursive meditation, by which they go in search of Him so inadequately and with so many difficulties, and lead them into the exercise of spirit, in which they become capable of a communion with God that is more abundant and freer of imperfections. God does this after beginners have exercised themselves for a time in the way of virtue and have persevered in meditation and prayer. For it is through the delight and satisfaction they experience in prayer that they have become detached from worldly things and have gained some spiritual strength in God. This strength has helped them somewhat to restrain their appetites for creatures, and through it they will be able to suffer a little oppression and dryness without turning back. Consequently, it is at the time they are going about their spiritual exercises with delight and satisfaction, when in their opinion the sun of divine favor is shining most brightly on them, that God darkens all this light and closes the door and spring of the sweet spiritual water they were tasting as often and as long as they desired. For since they were weak and tender, no door was closed to them, as St. John says in the Apocalypse. [Ap. 3:8 ]

God now leaves them in such darkness that they do not know what way to turn in their discursive imaginings; they cannot advance a step in meditation, as they used to, now that the interior sensory faculties are engulfed in this night. He leaves them in such dryness that they not only fail to receive satisfaction and pleasure from their spiritual



exercises and works, as they formerly did, but also find these exercises distasteful and bitter. As I said, when God sees that they have grown a little, He weans them from the sweet breast so that they might be strengthened, lays aside their swaddling bands, and puts them down from His arms that they may grow accustomed to walking by themselves. This change is a surprise to them because everything seems to be functioning in reverse.<sup>1</sup>

John of the Cross dedicates numerous pages of instructions about how to ascertain the appropriate level in one's spiritual development when the transition from discursive meditation to empirical contemplation should be effected. Basically the three qualifying signs<sup>2</sup> which simultaneously must accompany entrance into the contemplation stage are: (a) a powerlessness to continue discursive meditation due to the complete dryness and barrenness apparent in the soul and due to the habitual practice of meditation now formed in the soul's faculties, (b) an awareness of a disinclination to focus the imagination

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, I, 8, iii.

<sup>2</sup>The "signs" listed are from the Ascent, and pertain specifically to "beginners" advancing from meditation to contemplation. There are three other "signs" discussed in the Dark Night which distinguish the aridity felt in the soul after the work of purgation from the aridity experienced due to wilful sin and imperfections. Though there is a similarity in these two sets of "signs," they are given for different purposes and should not be confused as McMahon, op. cit., Frost, op. cit., (Comp.: Ascent, II, 8 and 9, and Night III, 9, xx. i).

or sense media upon particular exterior or interior objects, and, (c) a strong desire to find solitude in the "loving awareness of God" without the usual discursive activity and exercises of the intellect, memory, and will.<sup>1</sup> These three signs, then, must be noticeable simultaneously before advancement into contemplation can be undertaken.

John does leave room, however, for an overlap in the transition from discursive meditation to passive contemplation. In reply to the question as to whether "proficients whom God begins to place in this supernatural knowledge of contemplation" should ever again practice discursive meditation, the saint says that for a brief time it might be necessary to both meditate and contemplate, though the need for meditation as an exercise will become less and less, as the habit of meditation becomes more and more a way of life.<sup>2</sup> He also recognizes that simple fulfillment of the spiritual requirements for beginners is not a guarantee that all of them will be granted the privilege of contemplation, for

God does not bring to contemplation all those who purposely exercise themselves in the way of the spirit, nor even half. Why? He best knows. As a result He never

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 13 and 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 15.

completely weans their senses from the breasts of considerations and discursive meditation, except for some short periods and at certain seasons.<sup>1</sup>

In general, however, for those who do experience the "exchange" (trueque) from the "life of the senses" to the "life of the spirit" the pathway of

. . . meditation is now useless for them, because God is conducting them along another road, which is contemplation and which is very different from the first. For the one road belongs to discursive meditation and the other is beyond the range of the imagination and discursive reflection.<sup>2</sup>

The poetic hinge on which John turns his theological converse from meditation to contemplation is the refrain at the end of the first stanza of the Ascent-Dark Night poem:

My house being now all stilled  
(Estando ya mi casa sosegada.)

All the sensory faculties of the soul must be "stilled" before the preparation for the greater work, the infused work of God, has

---

<sup>1</sup>Night I, 9, ix. John also makes room for yet another category of persons: "Thus God purges some individuals who are not destined to ascend to so lofty a degree of love as are others. He brings them into this night of contemplation and spiritual purgation at intervals, frequently causing the night to come and then the dawn so that David's affirmation might be fulfilled: He sends His crystal (contemplation) like morsels. [Ps. 147:17] These morsels of dark contemplation, though, are never as intense as is that frightful night of contemplation." Night II, 2, i.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 10, ii. (Author's underlining.)

been fulfilled. But the task of the journey to union has only begun, for

. . . the purgation of the principal part, that of the spirit, is lacking, and without it the sensory purgation, however strong it may have been, is incomplete because of a communication existing between the two parts of the soul which form only one suppositum.<sup>1</sup>

The purgation of the spirit is extremely significant in that it involves the proficient in the indispensable transition from the creaturely mode of meditation to the mode of thought that is in accordance with the nature of God. It is a difficult and exacting discipline, since it bridges the extremities of man's agent intellect and God's infused self-revelation. What is to be received by man in the unitive experience with God is none other than God Himself, and thus the conditioning of man's spirit for this encounter is of utmost importance. Discursive meditation will no longer suffice, simply because it represents the efforts of man's agent intellect and does not accord with the divine essence of God which is to be experienced.

In support of this reality, John cites Aristotle in saying: "Whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver."<sup>2</sup> This basic idea which John incorporates in his own basic theology, is the key to understanding the extensive emphasis he gives

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 1, 1.

<sup>2</sup>Flame 3, xxxiv.

to divinely infused contemplation as the necessary discipline for arriving at union with God. Since God Himself is the content of what is received, it necessarily follows that man must be changed in some manner if he is to be capable of knowing God empirically. The creaturely mode in itself is simply not capacitated to receive God in His own Being without a transformation first taking place in the recipient. Man must be lifted out of his old concepts and his previous ways of thinking and loving to a higher and completely unique mode of thought and love. The supernatural simply will not fit into the natural. John explains it in the following manner:

It is obvious that if a person does not lay aside his natural active manner, he will not receive that good except in a natural manner, and thus he will not receive it but will remain only with his natural act. For the supernatural does not fit into the natural, nor does it have anything to do with it. If a person should, then, desire to act on his own through an attitude different from the passive loving attention we mentioned, in which he would remain very passive and tranquil without making any act, unless God would unite Himself with him in some act, he would utterly hinder the goods God communicates supernaturally to him in the loving knowledge. This loving knowledge is communicated in the beginning through the exercise of interior purgation, in which the individual suffers, as we said, and afterwards in the delight of love.

If as I say--and it is true--this loving knowledge is received passively in the soul according to the supernatural mode of God, and not according to the natural mode of the soul, a person, if he wants to receive it, should be very annihilated in his natural operations, unhampered, idle, quiet, peaceful, and serene, according to the mode of

God. The more the air is cleansed of vapors, and the quieter and more simple it is, the more the sun illumines and warms it. A person should not bear attachment to anything, neither to the practice of meditation, nor to any savor, whether sensory or spiritual, nor to any other apprehensions. He should be very free and annihilated regarding all things, because any thought or discursive reflection or satisfaction upon which he may want to lean would impede and disquiet him, and make noise in the profound silence of his senses and his spirit, which he possesses for the sake of this deep and delicate listening.<sup>1</sup>

. . . as Habacuc declared he was obliged to do in order to hear what God spoke to him: I will stand on my watch and fix my foot upon my fortress, and I will contemplate what is said to me. [Hb. 2:1] This is like saying: I will raise my mind above all activity and knowledge belonging to my senses and what they can retain, leaving all below, and will fix the foot of the fortress (my faculties), not allowing these faculties to advance a step as regards their own operation that they may receive through contemplation what God communicates to me; for we have already asserted that pure contemplation lies in receiving.<sup>2</sup>

The actual work of transformation is a work of God's Spirit who anoints the soul, fills it with graces, and prepares it for receiving the divine self-giving.

. . . the blessings this silent communication and contemplation impresses on the soul, without its then experiencing them, are, as I say, inestimable. For they are most hidden unctions of the Holy Spirit and hence most delicate, and they secretly fill the soul with spiritual riches, gifts, and graces; since it is God who grants them, He does so in no other manner than as God.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3, xxxvi.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 3, xl f.

Thus it is through God's work in transforming the receiver that the giving of Himself in union with man is made possible. He accomplishes this by changing man's mode of thought from discursive meditation to divinely infused contemplation, or what has previously been described in this study as the transition from confidence in the human agent intellect to faith in God as the Sovereign Agent Intellect. It is the disengagement from man's ordinary epistemological processes to the un-knowing mode of learning as the means for receiving the presence of God in one's experience. This latter discipline is what John of the Cross terms "infused" or "pure" contemplation.

#### The Infused Aspect of Contemplation

In any discussion of the nature of contemplation in John of the Cross, the controversial subject of its "acquired" or "infused" character needs brief consideration.<sup>1</sup>

"Infused" versus "Acquired" Contemplation. In none of his writing does John imply that the experience he calls "contemplation"

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf., Pere Foulain, The Graces of Interior Prayer, trans., Leonora L. Yorke Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited), is emphatic in his espousal of two of the kinds of prayer or contemplation. In his supportive list of mystical writers who teach both kinds of contemplation, he includes St. Theresa and rightly omits John of the Cross, pp. 635 ff.

is anything but an infused gift of God's love in the soul.<sup>1</sup> By the same token, the expression "infused meditation" is not found in any of his treatises, though there can be no doubt that the spiritual purgation which results from discursive meditation in John's theology is principally a work of God.<sup>2</sup> There is also no denying that John recognizes both the practical and spiritual values to be "acquired" through

---

<sup>1</sup>The one passage that is cited in defense of the "acquired contemplation" theory regarding John's theology is taken from the Ascent, where the expression adquirir el habito is used. (Ascent II, 15, i) The context and John's other teachings are decisive in this instance. The Ascent deals with the active night of the senses in which "what the soul was periodically acquiring through the labor of meditation on particular ideas has now been converted into the habitual and substantial, general and loving knowledge." (Ascent, II, 14, ii). The effectuation of the transformation that takes place from acquired meditation to infused contemplation involves, on the human side, the laws of habit; but, on God's side it involves only the sovereignty of His grace. The meditational stage in John's journey to union with God is as necessary as the contemplative, but during the transition from the lower stage to the higher, there is an overlap where both are operative to greater or lesser degrees. The massive weight of all of John's subsequent teachings, once the transition is effected, is that the superior converse called contemplation results in full passivity on the part of man's "labor of meditation" and in the solitary activity by God's Spirit in accordance with the degrees of purification and other factors (divine and human) involved.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Night, I, 3, iii. (Previously quoted in this present work.)



meditative reflection (but not "acquired" through contemplation).<sup>1</sup>

He lists these as: (1) The value of the "substantial and habitual spirit of meditation" and, (2) "The spiritual good" which is derived from it as a preparation for contemplation. In further explanation the Saint says:

It should be known that the purpose of discursive meditation on divine subjects is the acquisition of some knowledge and love of God. Each time a person through meditation procures some of this knowledge and love he does so by an act. Many acts, in no matter what area, will engender a habit. Similarly, the repetition of many particular acts of this loving knowledge becomes so continuous that a habit is formed in the soul. God, too, effects this habit in many souls, without the precedence of at least many of these acts as means, by placing them at once in contemplation.

What the soul, therefore, was periodically acquiring through the labor of meditation on particular ideas has now, as we said, been converted into the habitual and substantial, general and loving knowledge. This knowledge is neither distinct nor particular, as the previous. Accordingly the moment prayer begins, the soul, as one with a store of water, drinks peaceably, without the labor and the need of fetching the water through the channels of past considerations, forms, and figures. At the moment it recollects itself in the presence of God, it enters upon an act of general, loving, peaceful, and tranquil knowledge, drinking wisdom and love and delight.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>McMahon confuses the "acquired" effects of discursive meditation in John with their functional relation to infused contemplation, and wrongly concludes that the Mystical Doctor teaches two kinds of contemplation. McMahon, *op. cit.*, p. 73 f. This idea would have been tantamount to pelagianism for John of the Cross.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, II, 14, ii.

Whether contemplation is ultimately "acquired" or "infused" will have to be left to empirical experience, but of John's teaching in the matter there is no room for debate. The Mystical Doctor reserves the term contemplation for the infused experience of the soul's purification and the spiritual infilling that can only proceed from God.<sup>1</sup> In the preparatory stages prior to full contemplation he would admit the roles of discipline, submissiveness, and habit as well as the work of God in the make-up of discursive meditation. But, regarding contemplation per se, John uses the adjective infused with it no less than twenty-five times, and the passive idea of infusion is the context in many others.<sup>2</sup> The reason for the term is due to (a) the divine origin

---

<sup>1</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange states that "certain authors maintained that the Saint [John of the Cross] had [originally] treated only of acquired contemplation." The implication in Garrigou-Lagrange is that this position was taken in order to defend John against charges of illuminism. The authors who took this position are not cited, however. Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, Christian Perfection and Contemplation, trans. by Sister M. Timothea Doyle, O. P. (London: B Herder Book Co.), p. 225.

<sup>2</sup>The word infusa is never associated with the noun contemplation in the Ascent, and only twice in the Canticle. However, it is freely used in the Dark Night and Living Flame. The explanation of its absence from the Ascent is probably that John does not want to confuse the activity of the night of the senses (the Ascent theme) with the passivity involved in this concept of contemplation. The whole idea of contemplation is only obliquely discussed in Book One of the Ascent. Its principal use comes in Book Two of the Ascent and in the Dark Night and in the Living Flame, where John's major emphasis is on divine activity and human passivity.

of contemplation in the union experience, and (b) its supernatural nature as the following passages indicate:

In the contemplation we are discussing (by which God infuses Himself into the soul), particular knowledge as well as acts made by the soul are unnecessary, because God in one act is communicating light and love together, which is loving supernatural knowledge. We can assert that this knowledge is like light which transmits heat, for that light also enkindles love. This knowledge is general and dark to the intellect because it is contemplative knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Contemplative knowledge includes the revelation of God Himself in that it is the "high place where God in this life begins to communicate and show Himself to the soul, but not completely. Hence He does not say that He is fully in sight, but that He is in sight. However sublime may be the knowledge God gives the soul in this life, it is but like a glimpse of Him from a great distance."<sup>2</sup>

Infused Contemplation Related to Discursive Meditation. Contemplation, then, cannot be experienced without the prior activity of God and the soul in the exercise of discursive meditation. This experience of meditation prepares the soul for contemplation by lulling to sleep all the sensory-based appetites, motives, and imaginations. In this manner, they are purified and purged for the sublime "loving knowledge" about God which He infuses by His Spirit. It is the primary function of contemplation to receive what God wills to give the soul, and not to act or exercise its spiritual or sensory faculties.<sup>3</sup> What

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame, 3, xlix.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 13, ii-x.

<sup>3</sup>Flame, 3, xxxvi.

God gives is two-edged by nature. It is the living flame of love which purges and purifies on the one hand, and infuses love, joy, peace, and the very presence of God on the other.<sup>1</sup> Thus, contemplation is more than the passive inflow of discursive knowledge. It is the beginning stages of the encounter with God Himself.<sup>2</sup> It is an empirically known encounter in which God elects to be both its source and content.

To summarize, contemplation cannot be reduced to mere definition for it is not primarily the activity of man but the work and presence of the Spirit of God in the soul. It is no wonder that the nature of contemplation is described by its effects. To define the being of another person is impossible for being cannot be reduced to language. To describe the effect that a person has in one's own life is quite common. This is basically what John of the Cross is doing in his major works when he speaks of God's activity in the soul. He calls this ontological effect contemplación.

## II. The Purpose and Accessibility of Empirical Contemplation

What is the purpose of the spiritual experience which occupies such a major role in the theology of John of the Cross? Is its purpose

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2, i-v.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3, xlix.

a worship exercise, an ecstasy, or the obtainment of some additional revelation beyond the Scriptures? Why endure the rigors and dryness of self-denial and purgation for the gift of infused contemplation? And, who can participate in this experience--only the theologically oriented or the morally elite? The purpose of contemplation must be profound to merit the proportional degree of spiritual mortification involved in its preparation and the accessibility of this experience must be difficult since so few people claim to have experienced it. It is in answer to these questions that the present study is now directed.

### The Purpose of Empirical Contemplation

The reasons for the minute purgations that are required of the soul prior to the experience of infused contemplation are summed up in the words of John when he describes the departure of the soul in search of God:

It departs in the dark night from itself and from all creatures, fired with love's urgent longings, and advances by the secret ladder of contemplation to perfect union with God who is its beloved salvation.<sup>1</sup>

Is it really possible in this present creaturely existence of mankind that one can personally experience the very essence of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, II, 21, x.

Almighty? John teaches that this is not only possible, but he goes further to describe it as more than an encounter. It is the operational and essential union of the soul with God's very Being.

Sanjuanist scholars are unanimous in describing the Spiritual Canticle as John's personal poetic testimony of infused contemplation in his life, and of the union of his soul with God. The same is true of the poem Living Flame of Love, and of the longer poem, I Entered Into Unknowing, which deals primarily with the nature and results of a high (harta) contemplation experience of John of the Cross.<sup>1</sup> The Mystical Doctor and hundreds of others like him, claim this type of transcendent encounter with God. John gave the best years of his life to mentally organizing the stages of these extraordinary spiritual experiences and reducing them, as far as possible, to literary form. The purpose of it all is "perfect union with God" which, for John, is the most sublime experience available or possible to man.

#### The Accessibility of Empirical Contemplation

The accessibility or availability of the experience of contemplation (and ultimate union with God) is inclusive, practical, and theocentric in John of the Cross, for it leaves open the possibility of divine

---

<sup>1</sup>Both the English and Spanish versions of this eight stanza poem are reproduced in Kavanaugh, op. cit., pp. 718, ff.

union for anyone who desires to seek the knowledge that comes from this personal relationship with God through discursive meditation and contemplation. The inclusiveness is that John never gives the least implication that the experience of divine union is available only to the theologically expert or to those who ascribe to a particular doctrinal formula. Of course, his general restrictions weigh heavily in the background of his writings. He takes for granted that he is dealing with: (a) baptized persons of the Roman Catholic faith, (b) dedicated persons within that faith who desire a closer relationship with God, and, (c) ascetically and mystically minded persons who are inclined to attempt the physical and spiritual privations necessary to prepare them for the "marriage" experience with God through the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> No one is excluded from the divine "marriage altar," but those who desire the experience must go through the "dark night" of the preparational and betrothal stages. To all of these the "secret ladder" of contemplation is available.

---

<sup>1</sup>Most of John's writing was produced at the request of the professionally religious, and he addresses the Ascent particularly to the "persons of our holy Order of the Primitive Observance of Mount Carmel, both friars and nuns, whom God favors by putting them on the path leading up this mount, since they are the ones who asked me to write this work. Because they are already detached to a great extent from the temporal things of this world, they will more easily grasp this doctrine on the nakedness of spirit." Ascent, Prologue, ix. These persons were not, however, highly trained in theology and other related subjects, as is customary today.

John is realistic with regard to the universal attainment of the unitive goal in that he recognizes that not all ("not even half") of those who begin the journey toward divine union will persevere. Those who fall by the wayside have not fallen from their "state of grace," they have only chosen the lesser road. In fact, they may have inadvertently chosen to postpone their purgations until the purifying fire of purgatory.

This suffering [of purgation] resembles that of purgatory. Just as the spirits suffer purgation there so as to be able to see God through clear vision in the next life, souls in their own way suffer purgation here on earth so as to be able to be transformed in Him through love in this life.<sup>1</sup>

For this purgation is that which would have to be undergone there [in purgatory]. The soul that endures it here on earth either does not enter purgatory, or is detained there for only a short while. It gains more in one hour here on earth by this purgation than it would in many there.<sup>2</sup>

But John is theocentric in his teachings regarding the accessibility of union with God. He realizes that it is not merely a matter of "faith" on man's part as if faith were voluntary decision and human perseverance in accepting and fulfilling the requirements of purgation. The first and final initiative in the unitive experience is left with God, for ultimately, it is Himself that God is communicating, and it is His own eternal purposes that are involved.

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame, I, xxiv.

<sup>2</sup>Night, II, 6, vi.



. . . only those whom God wishes to elevate to the highest degree of union. For He prepares each one by a purification more or less severe in accordance with the degree to which He wishes to raise him, and also according to that person's impurity and imperfection.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly then, all persons can begin the journey toward high contemplation but many will not endure its rigorous self-denial requirements. In the final analysis, it is only those with whom God wills to communicate Himself who reach fulfillment in the rewarding experience of union with omnipotent love.

### III. The Stages of Empirical Contemplation

There is but one kind of contemplation in the theology of John of the Cross, though he uses various adjectives to describe the distinctive functions of the contemplative purpose. For example, he calls it "dark and secret contemplation,"<sup>2</sup> "infused contemplation,"<sup>3</sup> "loving contemplation,"<sup>4</sup> "purgative contemplation,"<sup>5</sup> "unitive contemplation,"<sup>6</sup> "clear contemplation,"<sup>7</sup> "serene contemplation,"<sup>8</sup> and even "beatific contemplation."<sup>9</sup> These are all descriptive of contemplation's function

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame, I, xxiv.

<sup>2</sup>Night, I, 10, vi.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 1, i.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 6, i.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., II, 23, xiv.

<sup>7</sup>Canticle, 39, xiii.

<sup>8</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup>Loc. cit.

and effect, but they are in no wise to be considered as representing various species or classes of contemplation in the writings of the Mystical Doctor.

There are, however, distinctive levels or stages that are attained during the perfecting experience. The two major divisions of the perfecting process are: meditation and contemplation. The former is the "active night" of the sensory purgation and, therefore, is found primarily treated in the Ascent.<sup>1</sup> It is the inferior mode of preparation for the unitive experience, but it is as necessary as contemplation itself:

. . . in regard to discursive meditation, in which an individual begins his quest for God, it is true that he must not turn away from the breast of the senses for his nourishment until he arrives at the time and season suitable for so doing--that is, when God brings the soul to a more spiritual converse, to contemplation. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Discursive meditation, as has been previously noted, is an activity of purgation and spiritual communication which is carried on

---

<sup>1</sup>The word meditacion is used frequently in the first book of the Night, but only in a transitional sense: from the activism of the Ascent to the passivity required for the "nights of faith and the spirit." It is found in the Flame, but in a retrospective manner, or as a topic of admonition relating to "spiritual directors" who give unwise counsel. Never is it employed in the Night, Canticle, or Flame as an aspect of "contemplation."

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 17, vii.

by God in cooperation with the mystical "beginner," but John of the Cross reserves the term "contemplation" strictly for the "more spiritual converse" which is effected entirely by God in the "proficients." Thus, discursive meditation is not a degree or stage of contemplation. It is only the indispensable preparation for it, and in John's theology, that which is "God used" should never be confused with that which is "God-infused."

In John's use of the terms "beginners" and "proficients" in relation to the divine union process, it should be indicated that the distinction between these two classes of persons in the Saint's thinking has to do not only with the progressive element in one's self-emptying and spiritual discipline, but it also pertains to the activity of God in relation to the soul's capacity. God sovereignly limits Himself in the work of divine infusion to the soul's capability for receiving Him. John emphasizes this restriction in his discussion of God as Infinite Voice which seeks to infill the soul.

. . . It should be known that God is an infinite voice, and by communicating Himself to the soul in this way He produces the effect of an immense voice.

St. John heard this voice and says in the Apocalypse that the voice he heard from heaven erat tamquam vocem aquarum et tamquam vocem tonitrui magni (was like the voice of many waters and like the voice of a great thunder). [Ap. 14:2] That it might not be thought that because this voice was so great it was harsh and painful, he immediately adds that it

was so gentle it sounded sicut cithareodorum citharizantium in citharis suis (like many harpers laying on their harps). [Ap. 14:2] And Ezechiel says that this sound as of many waters was quasi sonum sublimis Dei (like the sound of the most high God), that is, this infinite voice was communicated in a most lofty and gentle way. For as we said, it is God Himself who communicates Himself by producing this voice in the soul. But He limits Himself in each soul, measuring out the voice of power according to the soul's capacity, and this voice produces great delight and grandeur.<sup>1</sup>

The effect of God's activity in the soul is to gradually wean it away from its own natural desires and its ordinary intellectual patterns that are rooted in the agent intellect. This weaning away tends to draw the soul from self-confidence in human reasoning and its own moral capabilities. It even leads man away from his powers of imaginative constructions and phantasms and directs him toward the divine nature and modes. The soul is thus enlarged and elevated spiritually with the result that it reaches a higher plane of existence where the discursive (active) reason cannot follow. But here the receptive (passive) reason begins to function as it is molded in accordance with the nature of what it receives from God.

In this process, the light of God is so excessive for the beginner and it so necessarily blinds him that his own natural light is seemingly blanked out. John explains that faith is the "obscure habit

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 14-15, x f.

of the soul" which makes possible this work of God in man's intellect.

It is an obscure habit because it brings us to believe divinely revealed truths which transcend every natural light and infinitely exceed all human understanding. As a result the excessive light of faith bestowed on man is darkness for him, because a brighter light will eclipse and suppress a dimmer one. The sun so obscures all other lights that they do not seem to be lights at all when it is shining, and instead of affording vision to the eyes it overwhelms, blinds, and deprives them of vision, since its light is excessive and unproportioned to the visual faculty. Similarly the light of faith in its abundance suppresses and overwhelms that of the intellect. For the intellect, by its own power, comprehends only natural knowledge, though it has the potency to be raised to a supernatural act whenever our Lord wishes.<sup>1</sup>

It is this supernatural act which includes both the weaning and enlarging activity of God in the soul. The brighter the divine Light shines, the less the minor lights of natural reason are seen. The less the minor lights of natural reason function, the greater the soul's capacity for God becomes. "Beginners," then, are those who are commencing to experience darkness in the agent intellect, and "proficients" are those whose capacity for the Being of God has been elevated and enlarged. This latter process of elevating and enlarging the soul's capacity for God is the experience that John calls "contemplación" and to understand it better, certain "stages" can be noted in its development.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 3, i.

However, to divide the contemplation period of John's mystical experience into separate stages is a somewhat arbitrary task, since the saint does not specifically denote clearly marked levels of progress in contemplation though it can be affirmed positively that in expounding this lengthy doctrine, he includes the progressive nature of the experience in the exposition.<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, not a progression which can be measured by categorical distinctions, but in John's thinking, the movement of the soul from the purifying effects of discursive meditation to the transforming realization of divine union is an extended spiritual advance that lends itself for demarcation into general stages or degrees.<sup>2</sup>

The following broad distinctions can serve as an aid to the study of John's teachings on contemplation, which otherwise would be

---

<sup>1</sup>The progressive element in the concept of the three "nights" is indicative of the idea of "stages" in John's thinking. However, the "active night of the senses" does not involve the effect of contemplation. The nocturnal allegory of the saint should not, therefore, be used to indicate degrees in contemplation. Cf. also Night, II, 18, iii & v.

<sup>2</sup>No definite time limits are given for the duration of the contemplation period, but at least in one place John says that the soul "usually spends many years exercising itself in the state of proficients." Night, II, 1, i.

so extensive that the total picture would be obscured by the ponderous frame in which it hangs. The simplest division, then, of the progressive nature of the Mystical Doctor's views are: (1) the transitional and preparatory stage of contemplation, (2) the intensive and purer stage, (3) the perfected and realized stage and, (4) the beatific and eschatological stage. It is readily recognized that on the beginning end of this experience there is a blending out of the discursive meditation period of preparation, and on the perfective end there is a shading into the union experience itself. But we are dealing with personal factors, and not with precise mathematics, so even the overlap phases must be understood as integral parts of contemplative awareness.

#### The Preparational Stage of Contemplation

The transitional or preparatory stage of contemplation begins during the overlap period of the active and passive nights, or to say it another way, it begins in the overlay of Books II and III of the Ascent with Books I and II of the Dark Night. To be more specific, the initial stages of contemplation commence when the purification process in the "night of purgation" reaches a point where discursive meditation is incapable of rendering any effective progress of its own accord.<sup>1</sup> John

---

<sup>1</sup>This does not mean that discursive meditation is excluded at this point. Although it does not render progress by its own efforts, it

begins this journey into the contemplative aspects of the soul's purification in the Ascent when he arrives at the place where detachment from the soul's spiritual faculties becomes necessary to further personal perfection. Even as early as the sixth chapter of Book II he says: "Remember that I am now addressing those especially who have begun to enter the state of contemplation; with regard to beginners this journey should be discussed somewhat more completely."<sup>1</sup> The "state of contemplation" was entered this early in John's writing because in attempting to describe the denudation procedure which is necessary for complete purification of the intellect, the saint had recourse to a supernatural source. Only God in His grace can effect the absolute purgation that is indispensable in the intellect, if the progress toward union with God is to be realized. Simple discursive meditation will not suffice. God has used it to accomplish much in the beginning period, but it leaves the soul in such aridity and solitude that even by "emptying itself through its own efforts insofar as it can,"<sup>2</sup> the soul is incapable of completely devoiding the intellect, the memory, and the will. Many persons are not willing to go this deep

---

helps to make possible the progress of contemplation in this overlapping stage.

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 6, vii.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, II, 4, ii.



into self-denial, for ultimately they are enemies of the cross of Christ.

They are of the opinion that any kind of withdrawal from the world or reformation of life suffices. Some are content with a certain degree of virtue, perseverance in prayer, and mortification, but never achieve the nakedness, poverty, selflessness, or spiritual purity (which are all the same) that the Lord counsels us here. For they still feed and clothe their natural selves with spiritual feelings and consolations rather than divesting and denying themselves of these for God's sake. They think a denial of self in worldly matters is sufficient without an annihilation and purification of spiritual possessions. It happens that, when some of this solid, perfect food (the annihilation of all sweetness in God--the pure spiritual cross and nakedness of Christ's poverty of spirit) is offered them in dryness, distaste, and trial, they run from it as from death and wander about in search only of sweetness and delightful communications from God. Such an attitude is not the hallmark of self-denial and nakedness of spirit, but the indication of a "spiritual sweet tooth."

Through this kind of conduct they become, spiritually speaking, enemies of the cross of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The initial stage of contemplation, then, is the preparational period<sup>2</sup> when the intellect begins the devastating yet enlightening

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 7, v.

<sup>2</sup>It is probable that it is this "stage" of contemplation that John refers to as being "these morsels of dark contemplation." (Night, II, 1, i.) The mass of his teaching indicates that once a person begins the "pure contemplation" stage (meaning that it is not practiced in conjunction with any other spiritual exercise) he is given a "fear and dread of turning back" which apparently results in the process being fulfilled through the divine union experience. (Night, I, 13, iv.)

journey of passive purgation by the narrow path of "obscure contemplation," for, as John says:

Let us address the intellect of the spiritual man, particularly of him whom God has favored with the state of contemplation, for, as I asserted, I am now speaking especially to these individuals. We shall discuss the direction of self to God through faith, and the purification of what is contrary to faith so that the soul by "straitening" itself may enter upon the narrow path of obscure contemplation.<sup>1</sup>

Almost in the same context John states that "contemplation, by which the intellect has a higher knowledge of God, is called mystical theology, meaning the secret wisdom of God."<sup>2</sup> Thus even in this transitional stage, contemplation is spoken of as having both a purifying effect and an illuminating one in the intellect. The stilling of the intellect is one of the principal subjects of all of John's major works, so it is no wonder that he begins the contemplation experience with this higher faculty of the soul. Thus, the transitional stage of contemplation functions in conjunction with the processes of discursive meditation while the active purgation of the senses is still in progress and the purgation of the intellect begins. When the sensory purification is

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 7, xii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 8, vi.

is complete and the "state of contemplation" becomes thoroughly established in the mind and affections, it follows that a more intense degree of contemplation is attained.

### The Intensification Stage of Contemplation

The intensive or purer stage of contemplation is that period, prior to the final experience of union with God, when discursive meditation is terminated completely and the purgation and illumination processes are fulfilled in the soul by the infused power and virtues of the Holy Spirit. The mode of arriving at this stage is two fold in the thinking of John of the Cross: (a) It rests on the foundation of spiritually uplifting habits formed during the practice of discursive meditation, and (b) it is a result of the sovereign activity of God.<sup>1</sup> Discursive meditation has to be diminished since it basically represents the collaboration of man with God in the purifying process. But there comes a point in the development of Christian perfection when the soul has received "all the spiritual good obtainable through discursive meditation,"<sup>2</sup> and, though its spiritualizing effects remain, its further practice is of no avail.

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Ascent, II, 14, ii.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, II, 14, 1.

Fortunately, with the gradual infusion of the divine species of contemplation, a wealth of spirituality is progressively accumulated and thereby the purgation and perfecting process advances. The need for discursive meditation disappears and with it diminishes the ability to realize further spiritual growth in it and the joy that once came by the exercise of this inferior form of self-denial is gone also. The void that otherwise would have occurred in the soul is filled with the superior degree of advancement toward perfection. This begins the second, and more intense stage of contemplation.

The intermediate level of contemplation finds the sensory and spiritual faculties of the proficient who has persevered this far, in a state of repose. The active results of discursive meditation have stilled the appetities of the sensory faculties, and the passive effects of the initial stages of contemplation have quieted the desires of the spiritual faculties. If this peculiar status were to continue, a person would have "no activity whatsoever relative to God. For a person can neither conceive nor receive knowledge already prepared for him save through either the sensitive or spiritual faculties."<sup>1</sup> But while these perceptual faculties of man are inactive, the Holy Spirit is not, for it is through the very process of contemplation that He actuates and unites

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 14, vi.

the intellect, the memory, and the will to the infused knowledge of God.<sup>1</sup> Intensive and pure contemplation is thus an absolute necessity "in order to leave the way of discursive meditation"<sup>2</sup> and to advance in the journey toward union with God.

The first degrees of this stage of contemplation are at times . . . so recondite and delicate (especially when purer, simpler, and more perfect), spiritual, and interior that the soul does not perceive or feel it, even though employed with it . . . the purer, simpler, and more perfect the general knowledge is, the darker it seems to be and the less the intellect perceives.<sup>3</sup>

God's Spirit is at work in the soul while the sensory and spiritual faculties lie at rest. To the degree that the Spirit's purging labors are "received" by the passive subject, to that degree the contemplation process is intensified and advanced on its way toward the union experience itself. The means employed by the Spirit in effecting further "disencumberment, voiding, and deprivation"<sup>4</sup> are the three "theological virtues" of faith, hope and love. It is faith that dethrones the intellect, it is hope that pre-emptes the memory, and it

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 14, vii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 14, viii. It is interesting that a possible sign of this stage of spiritual advance which John suggests is forgetfulness in regard to time, location, and the passage of events. Cf. Ascent, II, 14, x-xii. The significance of this is discussed subsequently under "The Eschatological Elements" of contemplation.

<sup>4</sup>Ascent, III, 2, ii.

is love that over-rules the will. Though stated here in the space of a few words, this period of purgation and illumination in preparation for the unitive experience with God is the most strenuous, the darkest, and the most devastating of the three stages, and therefore requires an intensity and purity of contemplation that heretofore has not been experienced. It continues through the active night of the spirit and through the passive nights of the senses and of the spirit. It is a period of patience and of prayer, and a time of quietness and absolute receptivity toward God. Those in this stage should allow the soul

. . . to remain in rest and quietude, even though it may seem very obvious to them that they are doing nothing and wasting time, and even though they think this disinclination to think about anything is due to their laxity. Through patience and perseverance in prayer, they will be doing a great deal without activity on their part. All that is required of them here is freedom of soul, that they liberate themselves from the impediment and fatigue of ideas and thoughts and care not about thinking and meditating. They must be content simply with a loving and peaceful attentiveness to God, and live without the concern, without the effort, and without the desire to taste or feel Him. All these desires disquiet the soul and distract it from the peaceful quiet and sweet idleness of the contemplation which is being communicated to it.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the intensification stage of contemplation is a time filled with nothingness so far as the world and man's agent intellect are concerned. If the subject should desire to do something with his interior

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, I, 10, iv.

faculties, the result would be to "hinder and lose the goods which God engraves upon his soul through peace and idleness" of the contemplation experience. To exercise one's own faculties during this sublime period would be like a model who moves while sitting for a portrait: "the artist would be unable to finish, and his work would be disturbed."<sup>1</sup> This complete passivity on the part of the subject seeking union with God should be his natural desire at this stage, and he

. . . ought to desire rather that this be done quickly so that he may be no obstacle to the operation of the infused contemplation which God is bestowing, that he may receive it with more peaceful plenitude and make room in his spirit for the enkindling and burning of the love that this dark and secret contemplation bears and communicates to his soul. For contemplation is nothing else than a secret and peaceful and loving inflow of God, which, if not hampered, fires the soul in the spirit of love.<sup>2</sup>

Its Distinctive Role in Relation to Divine Union. During this stage of pure contemplation there is being produced such a deep solitude and "concern in the soul" that the divine love is already beginning to be "enkindled" in the spirit.<sup>3</sup> In addition to this, one of the "chief benefits" of this level of contemplation is the knowledge of one's self and the miseries which result from such awareness. In other

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, 10, v.

<sup>2</sup>Night, I, 10, vi.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I, 11, ii.

words, knowledge of self and of God is the principal purpose of the intensification stage of contemplation. "God cannot be known without man knowing himself" and, to illustrate this, John cites the instance in the desert when God commanded the children of Israel to take off their ornaments.<sup>1</sup>

This is like saying: Since the clothing you wear, being of festivity and mirth, is an occasion for your not feeling as lowly as you in fact are, put it aside, so that seeing the foulness of your dress you may know yourself and your deserts.<sup>2</sup>

. . . the state of perfection, which consists in perfect love of God and contempt of self, cannot exist without knowledge of God and of self, the soul necessarily must first be exercised in both.<sup>3</sup>

Such self-knowledge, according to John, leads to the deeper humility that is required for the initiative experience with God and through this humility "the person is purged of all those imperfections of the vice of pride into which he fell in the time of his prosperity."<sup>4</sup>

"Besides these benefits, innumerable others flow from this dry contemplation."<sup>5</sup> Some of these are: "spiritual sweetness," "the

---

<sup>1</sup>Exodus 33:5.

<sup>2</sup>Night, I, 12, ii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 18, iv.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, 12, vii.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I, 13, x.



twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit,"<sup>1</sup> and "a habitual remembrance of God accompanied by a fear and dread of turning back on the spiritual road."<sup>2</sup> But simultaneous with these blessings, God 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." The Lord accomplishes all of this by means of a "pure and dark contemplation"<sup>3</sup> which is "nakedness and poverty of spirit."<sup>4</sup> In other words, the two principal effects in the soul of this intense and purely infused contemplation are: "it prepares the soul for the union with God through love by both purging and illumining it."<sup>5</sup>

It can be noted, then, that this stage of contemplation in John of the Cross is not synonymous with the second stage of the traditional mystical formula of (1) the purgative way, (2) the illuminative way, and (3) the unitive way.<sup>6</sup> The Carmelite prefers to carry both the purgative

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, 13, xi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 13, iv.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 3, iii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 4, i.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 5, i.

<sup>6</sup>Clement of Alexandria appears to have been the first to employ this division. Cf. Clement, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. II, 1885. Trans., Potter. He is followed by many others in the history of Christian mysticism.

and illuminative ways simultaneously through the entire contemplative process. To him they are not two consecutive stages in spiritual advancement toward union with God, but are two correlative sides of the same work of the Holy Spirit. It is the illuminating effect of the divine contemplation that causes the purgative results in the soul. To John, purgation does not induce the light of illumination. On the contrary, the infused and sovereign Light of God in the soul is the cause of the purging and purifying effects,<sup>1</sup> which bring further darkness rather than "illumination to the soul." John illustrates this beautifully on various occasions,<sup>2</sup> and it is the theme of the Ascent-Dark Night volume.

In relating contemplation to this unique aspect of his mysticism, he says:

Before transforming the soul, it purges it of all contrary qualities. It produces blackness and darkness and brings to the fore the soul's ugliness; thus the soul seems worse than before and unsightly and abominable. This divine purge stirs up all the foul and vicious humors of which the soul was never before aware; never did it realize there was so much evil in itself, since these humors were so deeply rooted. And now that they may be expelled and annihilated they are brought to light and seen clearly through the illumination of this dark light of divine contemplation. Although the soul is no worse than before, neither in itself

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, II, 12, ii; and II, 13, x.

<sup>2</sup>E. g., ibid., II, 8, iv, and Ascent, II, 5, vi.

nor in its relationship with God, it feels undoubtedly so bad as to be not only unworthy that God should see it but deserving of His abhorrence; in fact, it feels that God now does abhor it.<sup>1</sup>

But the effects of this intense and pure contemplation on the soul are painful to experience. As the contemplation becomes more and more intense and as the darkness becomes proportionately more obscure, the presence of God's Being is nearer than ever. A sense of "serenity," and "inebriation of love," and a communication of "mystical knowledge" are experienced in the soul. This is all the beginning of the new clothing that God desires to place upon the soul: for He "makes the soul die to all that He is not, so that when it is stripped and flayed of its old skin, He may clothe it anew."<sup>2</sup> The beginning stages of the perfective level of contemplation come precisely when the soul is so stripped of its old self that it awaits in utter nakedness for the grace and love of God to clothe it.

There is yet another aspect of the intensive or maturative stage of John's contemplation that requires consideration. It is the phenomena called the "divine touches" (los toques de Dios), and his detailed emphasis given to this doctrine is one of the unique aspects of the mystical theology he propounds.

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, II, 10, ii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 13, xi.

The supernatural "toques," which figure so prominently in the love passages of the Spiritual Canticle and the Living Flame are a vital part of John's contemplation experience.<sup>1</sup> They are not mentioned at all in the first book of the Ascent, which indicates that they are not a part of the "active night" of sensory purgation. These toques (touches) are flashes of God's mercy and cleansing in the passive and unitive stages of contemplation, but they are difficult to place in any schematic treatment of John's theology, since they vary greatly in their nature, purpose, and effect. They are dealt with in this present context (the intensive stage of contemplation) not because they belong only to this phase of the contemplative exercise, but because they belong to both the progression side of the perfection goal and to the realization, or unitive, side. They are, in a sense, a part of the perfection process and they are a part of the perfect union experience itself, and they are also a foretaste of the beatific stage itself. Their consideration at this point in the study of John's doctrine of contemplation serves as a bridge into the penultimate stage which, according to John, is the supreme experience that man can attain while in the body--union with God.

---

<sup>1</sup>It is difficult to understand why Garrigou-Lagrange fails to include the Spiritual Canticle in his study of the "divine touches" of John of the Cross. Cf. op. cit., p. 454.

The place to begin the review of John's "divine touches" concept is to clarify at the onset that in his system there are varying modes of these delightful contacts with God. Though all of them are related substantially to the Divine Son as the Logos, this emphasis does not gain prominence in the treatises until the Mystical Doctor progresses from the active night of the senses and is well into the complete purgation of the spirit.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in the purgative process, while emptying the intellect, John speaks of these experiences as "touches of knowledge,"<sup>2</sup> and, in divesting the will, he uses the phrase "touch of burning."<sup>3</sup> In the former case, the touch is to supplant the ordinary knowledge of the intellect, and in the latter the touch has as its purpose the purifying of the soul's volition. The essence and intensity of the "touches" increase throughout the contemplative process until they become foretastes of the union experience here in this life and brief awarenesses of the immediacy of God in the next life.

The purpose of the toques de Dios is threefold: (1) to condition the soul for receiving permanently the divine union,<sup>4</sup> (2) to activate in the soul the divinely infused virtues,<sup>5</sup> and, (3) to raise the

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Flame, 2, xvii ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, II, 26, v, and Night, II, 13, iii.

<sup>3</sup>Night, II, 13, ii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 24, iii.

<sup>5</sup>Canticle, 17, v.

soul out of itself and into the sphere where divine union can be affected.<sup>1</sup> It can be seen, then, that these touches that God causes in the soul have the effect of further purging it, infusing it, and conditioning its substance for the necessary conformity which divine Love and Wisdom require.

The touches are "felt," "tasted," or otherwise spiritually sensed in the soul,<sup>2</sup> and the awareness of them is usually "sudden,"<sup>3</sup> or takes place "subtly"<sup>4</sup> in extreme "tranquillity,"<sup>5</sup> but always they represent God's direct contact in the soul, without any intermediate agent.<sup>6</sup> In this manner, the Creator "penetrates the whole soul"<sup>7</sup> or deals separately with one aspect of the soul, such as the will,<sup>8</sup> the intellect,<sup>9</sup> or with the very "substance" of the soul itself.<sup>10</sup> The touches occur when "least expected,"<sup>11</sup> and the recipient does not necessarily have to be occupied in "spiritual matters" at the moment of the immediate awareness of God.<sup>12</sup> Their duration varies,<sup>13</sup> but

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1, xx.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, II, 24, iv; II, 25, v.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 26, vi; Flame, 1, viii.

<sup>4</sup>Canticle, 25, v.

<sup>5</sup>Ascent, II, 26, viii.

<sup>6</sup>Night, II, 23, xi-xii.

<sup>7</sup>Flame, 2, xviii-xx.

<sup>8</sup>Ascent, II, 32, iii.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., II, 26, v.

<sup>10</sup>Loc. cit.; Flame, 2, vi-vii.

<sup>11</sup>Ascent, II, 26, viii; Ibid., II, 32, ii f.

<sup>12</sup>Ascent, II, 32, ii.

<sup>13</sup>Loc. cit.

usually they last for only short periods of time, because "if it [the touch] were [prolonged] the soul would be loosed from the body" due to the overpowering love and delight of the experience.<sup>1</sup> The intensity of these supernatural contacts is also variable,<sup>2</sup> since one's capacity for God depends on the "degree of the soul's perfection."<sup>3</sup> The frequency with which these "touches occur depends, of course, on the Divine Sovereign Will, but striving to remember God as Creator helps to recall the effect of the divine touches.<sup>4</sup> Though it would be regression to "desire" these experiences for the delight that accompanies them, just one of them "is worth more to the soul than numberless other thoughts and ideas about God's creatures and works."<sup>5</sup>

As infused contemplation becomes more perfected and more intensified, the divine touches are also more intense and more of the very essence of God's love. They are realized to be "substantial touches of divine union between God and the soul."<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 7, iv.

<sup>2</sup>Some are "weak and other are forceful." Ascent II, 26, ix.

<sup>3</sup>Canticle 25, vi.

<sup>4</sup>Ascent, III, 14, ii.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 26, ix.

<sup>6</sup>Night, II, 23, xi, and 24, iii.

With these touches the soul is purified, quieted, strengthened, and made stable that it may be able to receive permanently this divine union, which is the divine espousal between the soul and the Son of God. <sup>1</sup>

This espousal is more than a relationship of encounter, for it is now revealed that the toque at this stage is:

. . . a touch of substances, that is, of the substance of God in the substance of the soul. Many saints have attained to this substantial touch during their lives on earth. The delicateness of delight felt in this contact is inexpressible. I would desire not to speak of it so as to avoid giving the impression that it is no more than what I describe. There is no way to catch in words the sublime things of God which happen in these souls. The appropriate language for the person receiving these favors is that he understands them, experience them within himself, enjoy them, and be silent. <sup>2</sup>

The "touches" actually go beyond this present age in their eschatological significance. John of the Cross interprets the more intense toques as "flashes of glory and love . . . which are unable to fit into [the door of entry into the soul] because of the narrowness of man's earthly house,"<sup>3</sup> but upon being fully aware of this touch by the

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 24, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Flame, 2, xxi.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., i, xxviii, cf. also Ascent, II, 26, v: "Although the touch of knowledge and delight that penetrates the substance of the soul is not manifest and clear, as in glory, it is so sublime and lofty that the devil is unable to meddle, nor produce anything similar (for there is no experience similar or comparable to it), nor infuse a savor and delight like it. This knowledge savors of the divine essence and of eternal life, and the devil cannot counterfeit anything so lofty."



Word (Verbo) the soul can say "truthfully" that: "it tastes of eternal life."<sup>1</sup>

Although one does not have perfect fruition in this life as in glory, this touch, nevertheless, since it is a touch, tastes of eternal life. As a result the soul tastes here all the things of God, since God communicates to it fortitude, wisdom, love, beauty, grace, and goodness, etc. Because God is all these things, a person enjoys them in only one touch of God, and the soul rejoices within its faculties and within its substance.<sup>2</sup>

Thus for John of the Cross the "divine touches" represent an important epistemological phase of his empirical contemplation. They are not only foretastes of the unitive experience itself, but they are intuitively acquired cognitions which are indispensable for the journey toward realization of complete union. They serve well therefore to lead the present study into the Mystical Doctor's third stage of contemplation.

#### The Perfected Stage of Contemplation

The final and highest level of contemplation attainable here on earth, according to John of the Cross, is the perfected or realized stage. This is the ultimate in contemplation for souls still embodied

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 2, xxi.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

in the flesh, and thus it is the contemplation that continues with still greater intensity but it is a part of the union experience itself.

For his presentation of this stage of contemplation John employs an entirely different framework with which to convey the empirical concepts. Previously the backdrop he has used was that of a journey into darkest darkness "toward God," and, while this picture is not abandoned, the spiritual marriage figure is the one best suited for his teachings relative to God's union with the soul. All contemplation in this present life is "dark" according to John,<sup>1</sup> so the idea of obscurity prevails through this third stage and all of life, for that matter. However, the whole tenor of the presentation changes in this level since the author is here dealing with the love experience of union, and not with the tedious discursive steps leading up to it. This perfected or realized contemplation is compared to the "time of rising dawn"<sup>2</sup> when it is not yet fully day, and yet it is not utter darkness. The light is dawning, but it is still not seen in all its fullness and clarity. Thus, the soul is like a solitary sparrow in this stage, for it has the traits of a free bird. In an abridged form these are:

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 14 and 15, xvi. (John repeatedly cites Dionysius on this point: "[contemplation] is a ray of darkness." (Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, De Mystica Theologia, c. 1: PG 3, 999.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 14 & 15, xxiii.

First, the sparrow ordinarily perches on the highest thing. And so the spirit at this stage is placed in the highest contemplation.

Second, it always turns its beak toward the wind. Thus the spirit ever turns the beak of its affection toward the Spirit of Love, Who is God.

Third, it is usually alone and allows no other bird close to it, for when another perches nearby it flies away. Thus the spirit in this contemplation is alone in regard to all things, stripped of them all, nor does it allow within itself anything other than solitude in God.

The fourth trait is that it sings very sweetly. And so does the spirit sing sweetly to God at this time, for the praises it renders Him are of the most delightful love, pleasant to the soul and precious in God's eyes.

The fifth is that it possesses no definite color. So neither does the perfect spirit, in this excess, have any color of sensible affection or self-love; it does not even have any particular consideration in either its lower or higher part, nor will it be able to describe the mode or manner of this excess, for what it possesses is an abyss of the knowledge of God.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these new symbols for the unitive level of the divine union experience, John also introduces new adjectives to describe perfective contemplation. Some of these are: "sublime,"<sup>2</sup> "highest,"<sup>3</sup> "unitive,"<sup>4</sup> and the source of that "loving super-natural

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 14 & 15, xxiv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 13, ii, and 34, vi.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 14 & 15, xxiv.

<sup>4</sup>Night II, 23, xiv.

knowledge" which ultimately results in the divine-human union.<sup>1</sup> The God-given "touches" occur with such great intensity and frequency in this stage that finally the Bridegroom completely transforms the soul into Himself, and makes her ready for complete Christ-likeness through the Word. There remains only one level of contemplation which surpasses this perfected or realized state, and it must be held off until the time of "glory,"<sup>2</sup> for, "however sublime may be the knowledge God gives the soul in this life, it is but a glimpse of Him from a distance."<sup>3</sup>

It is in connection with the perfective and unitive stage of contemplation that John's teaching regarding the relation between self-detachment and divine attachment needs to be brought into clearer focus. A cursory reading of John's writings might lead to the erroneous conclusion that the process of complete self-detachment was a necessary pre-requisite before the process of attachment to God could begin. This impression is received from the manner in which the Mystical Doctor presents his subject matter due to the practical necessity laid on him to follow a logical literary structure rather than a less formal one.

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 3, xlix.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle 39, xiv.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 13, x.

In reality, however, the two aspects of the process toward union with God are simultaneously experienced, rather than consecutively or distinctly. Indeed, they are mutually related, for they are basically two aspects of the same activity of God in the soul. In other words, detachment from self is not a human activity, and attachment to God a divine work, and, the entrance of God into the experience of man is not based upon a prior condition of absolute sanctification, but upon the degree of sanctification which man desires.

As has been noted previously, John repeatedly teaches that contemplation is an infused work of God in which the initiative and activity reside wholly in His sovereignty. Man cannot accomplish his own self-purgation any more than he can elevate himself into the divine Being. Both are the work of God. Thus, under the impact of the "touches" of the Word, the soul becomes weakened in those attachments and habits which tend to pull it downward. But simultaneously it becomes freer and enlarged for the higher level and for more openness of communication with God.

#### The Beatific Stage of Contemplation

The "supreme contemplation"<sup>1</sup> which John of the Cross

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 13, ii. John is following St. Thomas in projecting the concept of supreme happiness out into the future to "the beatific vision" realization. Cf. St. Thomas, I, Q XII, 6.

discusses in his theology is the extension of the soul's divine worship into the future beyond its present bodily existence. This cannot be realized now because it is an experience in the perpetually "pure and clear contemplation of the divine essence"<sup>1</sup> and "a total transformation in the immense love of God."<sup>2</sup> For this reason, the bride (the soul) in the Spiritual Canticle speaks of the fruition and complete sense of fulfillment that would be hers if she could enjoy "the serene vision of God in heaven"<sup>3</sup> by means of "beatific and clear contemplation."<sup>4</sup> This is the sole remaining aspiration of one who has already reached divine union and perfection in this life.<sup>5</sup> But to experience the eschatological level of contemplation while still in the body would ultimately result in the separation of the soul from its embodied state. Thus when Christ revealed to the soul some "rays of His grandeur and divinity" she was carried "out of herself in rapture and ecstasy but the result was that the revelation had to cease immediately to prevent death itself."<sup>6</sup> While in the ecstasy, however, the soul experienced momentarily the

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 39, ii.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 39, xiii.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Theme, i.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 13, ii.

trinitarian love of the Godhead<sup>1</sup> and it lives on in the promised hope that when it leaves the body permanently at death, "the night of contemplation will have changed into day and light!"<sup>2</sup> No higher level of contemplation could be possible, and no greater light could be revealed.

#### IV. The Theological Elements of Contemplation

To gather together the major theological bases and significance underlying the central doctrine of contemplation as taught by John of the Cross, the following topics can best serve as polarizing guides: the practical elements, the perfectionistic elements, the eschatological elements, and the relation of contemplation to natural theology. The relation of contemplation to the divine union experience could also be included here, but, due to its extensiveness, will come later in the chapter which deals specifically with that topic.

##### Practical Elements of Contemplation

There are many practical aspects of John's doctrine of contemplation which undergird the whole concept. These can only be summarized at this point, since they are not of paramount importance to his theology as such.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 13, xi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 39, xiii.

One element that stands out in the writings of John is that he is careful to define his audience. He is not teaching this doctrine to persons who are not of the Christian faith and, in general, he is writing for the nuns and friars of his day who really desire to "pay the price" of Christian perfection. With this in mind, John does not endeavor to teach the fundamental dogmas of the faith, but he limits his works primarily to the one subject of union with God and the extreme ascetical sacrifices required for it.

The Mystical Doctor also takes for granted the disciplining effects of good habits. This is done both through discursive meditation and the early stages of contemplation. The habit of prayer, of adoration, of the Scriptures, of self control, and many other contemplative practices are so habitual that their effects become a part of the very way of life for those following John's plan of contemplation. It is in the reality of these wholesome spiritual habits that John's emphasis on complete passivity must be understood. These habits also underlie his use of the term "idleness" and other expressions that might be interpreted by some to mean complete inactivity during the months or years that the soul engages in contemplation. Prayer, for example, is such an integral part of faith and daily living to John of the Cross that he would classify a person as being inactive even when



the soul was in the act of intensive prayer. Like breathing, these contemplative habits are so ordinary that John does not include them in the category of religious works or volitional acts.

Still another practical element in the exercise of contemplation is John's insistence on the reception of God's loving contemplation "according to man's own mode."<sup>1</sup> This teaching in John's system has profound theological implications, but it stems primarily from two polar distinctions: (1) the nature of the divine knowledge which is attained through contemplation, and, (2) the problem of communicating this knowledge to the soul while its faculties of sensory perception are of no effectual value. John of the Cross perceives clearly that the sole appropriate means for this type of apprehension is an obedient receiving from man's side and God's sovereign wisdom and love on the other. The Mystical Doctor is practical on this issue in that he never lapses into any form of naturalism, moralism, or even the popular, speculative theology of his day. No hints of pelagianism can be found in this concept of contemplation, and neither is there the slightest suggestion of antinomianism. These dangers are avoided because of John's practical and theocentric epistemology with regard to faith as the only "mode" at man's disposal for knowing God ontologically.

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, II, 12, iv.

### Perfectionistic Elements of Contemplation

Basically, the Mystical Doctor's teaching on contemplation is the Christian doctrine of sanctification and perfection if it is understood that man's psychic, as well as his physical, faculties are included. Many other theological ideas are involved in this experience, but sanctification and perfection of the intellect, memory, and will are the principal concepts that John elucidates. In reality they are one doctrine, for personal sanctification has as its goal Christian perfection, and for its fulfillment, Christian perfection has no means in itself other than the divine activity of sanctification.

Related to the Doctrine of Sin. For a proper understanding of the perfectionistic elements in John's theology, it is necessary to delineate the imperfectionistic basis from which he endeavors to move the soul. This entails a brief study of the doctrine of sin as the Mystical Doctor teaches concerning it. At the outset it should be noted that nowhere in his writings does John give a systematic treatment of hamartiology as such, but at the same time no one can read his commentaries without an awareness of his intense sense of sin and the extent to which this doctrine qualifies and shapes all of his theology.

The speculative problem of the origin of evil does not concern John, but his Biblical studies led him to definite belief in the reality of

Satan as the personal source of evil in the world and to the human spirit as the immediate root of evil within man's experience. These two basic elements in John's concept of sin require further note. Avoiding any hint of an equal dualism, John clearly describes the power and work of Satan as existing under the permissive control of God, and he cites the cosmic dialogue between God and Satan as partially explaining the need of the existing unequal dualism in the cosmos in order to allow man liberty in choosing between God and the Devil.<sup>1</sup> Were Satan permitted no powers, and were he forbidden to deceive man in any way, he could then claim that man's allegiance to God was due to the disparity of power and realm of activity accorded Satan by the Creator. ". . . this is why God permits the devil to deal with the soul in the same measure and mode in which He conducts and deals with it Himself."<sup>2</sup>

There is, however, a massive difference between man's relationship to God and his relationship to the devil. With the Creator, man is inescapably bound, due to the fact that the presence of God abides in the substance of the soul.<sup>3</sup> Satan can maneuver man's

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. ibid., III, 43, iii, and Night II, 23, vi-vii (Job 1:9-11 and 2:4-5).

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ascent II, 16, iv, et al.

faculties,<sup>1</sup> he can counterfeit divine locutions,<sup>2</sup> dreams,<sup>3</sup> images,<sup>4</sup> and feelings,<sup>5</sup> he can even delude man by revealing to him reasonable ideas,<sup>6</sup> but he cannot take God's place in the substance of the soul, for ". . . the Master who teaches the soul dwells within it substantially where neither the devil, the natural senses, nor the intellect can reach."<sup>7</sup> Thus the power which John attributes to Satan is so supernatural that "el demonio" can practically duplicate anything which God produces in the intellect, memory, and will. Indeed, he can even transform himself into an angel of light,<sup>8</sup> and disguise himself as a particular saint,<sup>9</sup> or produce extraordinary phenomena through the accepted images of the church.<sup>10</sup>

Satan's influence is circumscribed, however, to man's senses and to his psychic faculties. Thus, when the spiritual senses, and the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 4, i.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 11, viii-ix.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 16, iii et al.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 16, iv.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 18, iii; Night II, 2, iii.

<sup>6</sup>Ascent II, 21, iv-viii.

<sup>7</sup>Night II, 17, ii.

<sup>8</sup>Ascent II, 11, vii; III, 10, i, et al.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., III, 37, i.

<sup>10</sup>Loc. cit.

intellect, memory, and will of the believer are absolutely stilled, the devil has no mode of contact<sup>1</sup> except by arousing one or all of these faculties out of their passivity.<sup>2</sup> But once the soul is united with God in the embrace of His love, it is then beyond the reach of Satan's craft and wiles.<sup>3</sup>

According to John, the roots of the devil's influence lie deep in man's nature, due to original sin. This disobedient act resulted not only in the captivity of the soul "in its mortal body, subject to passions and natural appetites,"<sup>4</sup> but also in its being surrounded by moral and spiritual "barriers between it and God."<sup>5</sup> Sin now affects all of man's faculties, corrupting his reasoning powers, his memory, and his will. These belong, in John's thinking, to the "natural" elements of man's nature and nothing of man's natural essence can help him find God. In point of fact, they alienate man further from the Creator, due to the spiritual estrangement of the soul from Him and because of their tendency toward self-pride and self-dependence.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Night III, 23, ii.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle 16, ii; 20-21, ix; Night III, 23, i-viii.

<sup>3</sup>Canticle 40, iii; Flame 4, xiv-xvi.

<sup>4</sup>Ascent II, 15, i.

<sup>5</sup>Canticle 23, ii.

<sup>6</sup>Ascent III, 10, i-iii; Night I, 2, i f., et al.

Thus, in John's theology, man is continually involved in the struggle with sin and imperfection. His problem is more than just a conquering of the rational structures of knowledge, for, regardless of the attainments he reaches in natural knowledge, his own nature separates him from God.

Although it is true that the disordered soul possesses in its natural being the perfection that God bestowed when creating it, nevertheless in its rational being it is ugly, abominable, dirty, dark, and full of all the evils here described, and many more besides.<sup>1</sup>

The root of man's problem is located by John in the spirit, and any attempt to improve man's moral and spiritual status must reach deep into the essence of his being.

The difference between the two purgations is like the difference between pulling up roots and cutting off a branch, or rubbing out a fresh stain and an old, deeply embedded one. As we said, the purgation of the senses is only the gate to and beginning of the contemplation which leads to the purgation of spirit. This sensitive purgation, as we also explained, serves more for the accommodation of the senses to the spirit than for the union of the spirit with God. The stains of the old man still linger in the spirit, although this may not be apparent or perceptible. If these are not wiped away by the use of the soap and strong lye of this purgative night, the spirit will be unable to reach the purity of divine union.<sup>2</sup>

The real purgation of the senses begins with the spirit. Hence the night of the senses we explained should be called a certain

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent I, 9, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Night II, 2, i.

reformation and bridling of the appetite rather than a purgation. The reason is that all the imperfections and disorders of the sensory part are rooted in the spirit and from it receive their strength. All good and evil habits reside in the spirit and until these habits are purged, the senses cannot be completely purified of their rebellions and vices.<sup>1</sup>

Moral purity through divine sanctification (contemplation) is a prerequisite for the liberation of the spirit for the pure reception of truth in the mode of what is received from God. But the means for arriving at this purity is grounded in the Incarnation and death of Christ,<sup>2</sup> and is made possible through the divine infusion of spiritual goods to the soul.<sup>3</sup>

After God places these three last kinds of good in the soul, He no longer remembers her former ugliness and sin, as He declares through Ezechiel [Ez. 18:22], for on account of these goods she is very agreeable to Him. And once He has blotted out this sin and ugliness, He no longer reproaches her for it, nor fails to impart more favors, since He never judges a thing twice.

Yet even though God forgets evil and sin once it is pardoned, the soul should not become oblivious of her former sins. As the Wise Man says: Be not without fear for sin forgiven. [Ecclus. 5:5]

There are three reasons why she should not forget her sins: first, so as always to have a motive against presumption;

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 3, i.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle 23, ii-iii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 33, i.

second, to have cause for rendering thanks; third, to incite herself to greater confidence, for if while in sin the soul received so much good from God, how many more remarkable favors will she be able to hope for now that God has placed her in His love, outside of sin?<sup>1</sup>

John's doctrine of sin conforms to the usual Roman Church's classifications of mortal and venial sins, but the theologically significant aspect of his teachings is that he does not give the major emphasis of his teachings to these outward manifestations of sin, but rather he stresses the inner rootage of sin in the spirit with its predilection for self-attainment, self-confidence and self-salvation. The doctrine of contemplation is the practical means whereby he teaches God's work in dealing with the sin problem in man's spirit.

Related to God in His Triune Nature. John of the Cross anchors his teaching on sanctification in the sovereignty, holiness, and love of God. These are appropriate bases for sanctification, since man's basic problem is ultimately the moral and ontological difference between what God is in regard to perfection and what man is in this respect. Furthermore, the Mystical Doctor maintains throughout the process of sanctification that the only holiness available to man is the divine essence kind which God alone can share with man. Thus, the initiative is always with the divine side, and man's role can only be that of obedient

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.



passivity while the work of God's grace is accomplished in his soul. This is pointed out by Father Lucas in his brief work on John of the Cross where he says that the secret of sanctification is "submissive obedience."<sup>1</sup> Any other effort or attitude on the part of man is sheer futility.

The heart, however, of John's doctrine of sanctification is in the positive role which God sovereignly assumes in communicating Himself to man through the "divine touches" in contemplation. To view these supernatural contacts as a peripheral aspect of John's theology is to miss the whole point of his experiential mode of knowing God.

The context of these touches is basic to an understanding of their place in John's thinking. They are not mystical in the sense that they represent a knowledge of God or a relationship to Him apart from Christ, or the Scriptures, or the Church. John of the Cross is most adamant in his total rejection of all claims of revelations, locutions, and visions which in any way imply the least circumvention of the divine order of self-communication.

The "touches of God," then, were never intended to represent flashes of direct mystical communication from a transcendent and far-removed God. Also, they are not "sparks in the soul" of a divine being

---

<sup>1</sup>Father Lucas of Saint Joseph, O. C. D., The Secret of Sanctity of John of the Cross, trans. Sister Mary Alberto, C. S. J. (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962), p. 74.

who dwells immanently in the creature or in his created environment. In more Biblical terminology, John of the Cross is not advocating the crashing in upon the soul of the Creator-God any more than he is teaching a direct revelation by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

These "touches of God" are experienced in the context of the Scriptures and the Church, and they are mediated through the Logos (Verbo) by the Spirit. This means that the knowledge received through them is intuitively acquired and that it is the Son as the WORD of God, who not only is the Divine Communicator of the sanctifying knowledge, but, as the Incarnate Truth, He is also the content of it. This is the reason John exclaims: "O delicate touch, the more abundantly You pervade my soul, the more substantial You are, the purer is my soul."<sup>1</sup>

A further verification that John identifies the sanctifying "touches of God" with the Son is his affirmation that the taste in these toques has the "savor of eternal life."<sup>2</sup> In using this expression he is emphasizing the substantial identification of the loving knowledge communicated in sanctification with the One who is eternal Life. Christian perfection (or sanctification) in John's thinking is made effective by implanting the divine Life of the Son in the place of the old life that is

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame, 2, ix. (Author's underlining.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2, xxi.

purged away by Truth. The "touches," then, are the two-edged sword that is the "Word of Truth" on one side which cuts away all false and impure concepts from the soul, and, the "Word of Life" on the other side which replaces the purged-away elements with engrafted divine Life in the soul. The actual divine agent of this Logos-mediated sanctification is the Holy Spirit, and sometimes His unctions in the soul "overflow into the body" with the result being that deep "feelings of delight and glory" are felt "in the outermost joints of the hands and feet."<sup>1</sup>

This, then represents a doctrine of Christian perfection which is theocentric in source, content, and method. It originates with God out of Himself. It is the incarnate holiness of God in Christ that is infused. It is the dynamic unction of the Holy Spirit who effects it in the soul. Viewed, then, from man's side it is the dynamic of ontological sanctification. Viewed from God's side it is pleasing because it is growth in the likeness of the Son in whom He is well pleased.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2, xxii.

<sup>2</sup>This interesting idea is found in one of John's lesser-known poems. The verses which touch on this present point are:

And when something pleases Me  
I love that thing in You;  
He who resembles You most  
Satisfies Me most,

This is Christian perfection in its Biblical and only effective form.

### Eschatological Elements of Contemplation

A third aspect of John's doctrine of contemplation which requires brief analysis at this point is its eschatological content. Like Aquinas, John of the Cross extends the positive functions and practice of contemplation beyond the present existence and into the age of the beatific vision.<sup>1</sup> The significance of this is probably best seen in the context of the three theological virtues, since John relates each of them to man and to God. Faith is thus related to man primarily in the intellect as the proximate and proportionate means for the attainment of

---

And he who is like You in nothing  
Will find nothing in Me.  
I am pleased with You alone  
O life of My life!

You are the light of My light,  
You are My wisdom,  
The image of My substance  
In Whom I am well pleased. Cf. Silverio, op. cit., p. 811.

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, Q, xii.

God's wisdom. Love is related to man's affections as they are centered in the will and through which man is able to realize God's Being, which is LOVE. Hope is related to man's memory, but its correlative in God goes beyond the union experience itself in that it is the proximate and proportionate means to "behold" God's glory. The theological implications of these relationships cannot be noted in the present section, but the eschatological association of memory, hope, and glory belong to this phase of highest contemplation.

John of the Cross follows in the Augustinian tradition, rather than that of Thomism, by including a third faculty in the soul along with the intellect and will.<sup>1</sup> He explicitly states that his doctrine of the soul's functional powers is not to "tear down" their effectiveness, but it is to free them (the intellect, memory, and will) from their "natural operations" in order to make room for the "inflow and illumination of the supernatural."<sup>2</sup> In the case of the intellect, the process of contemplation releases it for the infilling of Divine Wisdom. In the case of

---

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, De Trinitate, XII, 4 & 7. Cf. John Burnaby, ad, Augustine: Later Works (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1940), pp. 91 ff. This tricotomy of the soul in John of the Cross is distinct, however, in one aspect from the Augustinian. The decisive factor for the Augustinian division was the trinitarian nature of God whereas in John it is the inter-relations of the three theological virtues.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, III, 2, ii.

the will, it is released of its affection for self and the things of self that it might be filled with the divine agape. The memory is released from its former ideas and images and is correspondingly infused with the divine glory.

The glory of God, then, is the eschatological tension held in place in John's theology by the contingencies of the present age. Faith finds fulfillment by "hearing" the Logos in the "substantial locutions," in the divine toques, and in the unitive experience (auditive knowledge). Love finds fulfillment in the actual and substantial infusement of the Divine Being as Love into the very substance of the soul. Both faith and love are not permanently fulfilled in the union experience, because, in fact, its ontological elements unions are transient during the time that the soul remains in the body.

But hope is still unfulfilled to a greater degree since it relates to sight, and, prior to this stage, the contemplative consciousness has experienced only hearing for faith and affection for love. No "beatific vision" is seen in the present state of the soul, unless, in some ecstatic moment,<sup>1</sup> God slightly lifts the veil of His Glory at times, but were He to fully raise the curtain shielding man from the divine Essence, the whole of man's being would be obliterated. Only in the

---

<sup>1</sup>These are what John calls "flashes of glory." Cf. Flame, I, xxviii.

next life can hope "see" its fulfillment. This is the meaning of John's discussion of the beatific vision following the spiritual marriage.<sup>1</sup> The soul longs to see the glory of the Bridegroom and "lives in this hope" because the tension of a certain "emptiness" is still felt in the soul. But, "however intimate may be a man's union with God, he will never have satisfaction and rest until God's glory appears."<sup>2</sup> For this reason even in the union experience God has to cover the soul's memory with His hand as He did for Moses,<sup>3</sup> to protect it from "seeing" the divine glory and thereby be annihilated.

But, according to John of the Cross, all will be changed in the age to come. What was once hoped for will be seen, when man's body and soul are transformed. This takes place when he is elevated from the lower room of "hope" to the higher room of the "marvelous jewels" (admirable pedrería) of God's glory.<sup>4</sup> Memory will be resurrected into Glory, intellect will be converted into ontological Truth, and the will will eternally commune with Him Who is Love. Hope will not be

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, xxvii.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Exodus 33:22.

<sup>4</sup>"In principio erat Verbum," Silverio, op. cit., p. 812.

needed, for it is fulfilled by perfect sight. Faith will not be needed, for it is fulfilled by perfect hearing.<sup>1</sup> Only love abides, but it will eternally see and hear the Beloved.

There are still other aspects of John's eschatological emphasis which also deserve brief attention. To develop all of the theological implications involved in a complete analysis of them would require the space of an entire study in itself. Unfortunately, they can be alluded to only in a general manner in the present context.

It should be noted at the outset that John's eschatology is both realized and future. It is presently experienced through "touches" of the divine Word, and it is to be fully experienced in the age to come when the veil of the flesh is broken and the beatific vision of God is complete.

Infused contemplation is the means whereby John of the Cross makes eschatology partially realized in man's fleshly present existence. Thus, by fulfilling the disciplines prescribed and thereby allowing God to infuse the soul with His very own essence, the believer is able to penetrate beyond the existential involvement of the reason, memory, and will in the temporal situations of man's temporal life. Under the impact of divine infusion, the intellect actually functions only

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 9, iii.



passively,<sup>1</sup> the memory forgets routine and current matters,<sup>2</sup> and the will finds joy only "directing the fullness of its volitional strength toward God."<sup>3</sup> But this penetration has its positive effect in that a "cognitive union" is established with "Eternal Reason." John's emphasis on detachment and union in the knowing experience is not altogether unlike that described by Paul Tillich when he emphasizes the necessity for "cognitive distance" before there can be "cognitive union."<sup>4</sup> This "distance" for John is discussed as darkness, but the effect is a breaking through the existential "now" to an encounter with the Essential and Eternal. It is a release of man's intellect from the involvement in transient and temporal situations and a penetration into that which is both everlasting and real.

In this superior state, the mind is able to think purely and truly because it is wholly suffused with the Eternal Light. It is like the sunlit window described by John which is not the light but which appears to be the light because it is so completely filled with the light.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 32, iv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., III, 2, viii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., III, 16, ii.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 94 ff., and p. 156.

<sup>5</sup>Ascent II, 5, vi.

The cleaner the window the more the light can transverse it and the more participation there can be between that which is glass and that which is light.

To John of the Cross, the soul can never fully and perpetually penetrate through its existential ties with the contingencies of this life. It is always confined to the limitations of its fleshly prison house. To be liberated from the body is to be free to experience completely the beatific vision which, to John, is the pure hearing of God in His essential Being as Infinite Voice and Eternal Word.

But the point of the Mystical Doctor's entire theology is that, to a limited degree, this very experience is possible while the soul still inhabits the body. The cognitive union of man's mind with Essential Mind is possible now. In other words, the faithful contemplative can taste in the here and now the powers of the age to come. Eschatologically this means that the hereafter can be partially and personally experienced in the present. This is not a general "realized eschatology" whereby the kingdom is expanded on earth and righteousness is extended in a universal sense. It is a personal union with God's Being in the present which cannot as yet be perfected fully, and which is still overlaid with the silver-plate of faith.

Faith, . . . gives us God, but covered with the silver of faith. Yet it does not for this reason fail to give Him

to us truly. Were someone to give us a gold vase plated with silver, he would not fail to give a gold vase merely because it is silver-plated. When the bride of the Canticle wanted this possession of God, He promised to make her, insofar as possible in this life, gold earrings, plated with silver. [Ct. 1:10] He thereby promised to give Himself to her, but hidden in faith.

Thus the eschatological reach of faith is great even for man's present existence. "The knowledge of faith is not perfect knowledge," but it is a foretaste of the mind of God.<sup>2</sup> It is like the light of Gideon's militia when they held the lamps in their hands. The light was not clearly seen because the flame was hidden in darkness within the earthenware jars, but when the clay was broken, the light was clearly seen by all. John's explanation of this incident as it applies to the outreach of faith is significant:

Faith, typified by those clay jars, contains the divine light. When faith has reached its end and is shattered by the ending and breaking of this mortal life, the glory and light of the divinity, the content of faith, will at once begin to shine.

Manifestly, then, union with God in this life, and direct communication with Him, demands that one be united with the darkness in which, as Solomon said [3 Kings 8:12], God promised to dwell, and that one approach the dark air in which God was pleased to reveal His secrets to Job. A

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 12, iv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 12, vi.

man must take in darkness the earthenware jars of Gedeon and hold in his hands (the works of his will) the lamp (the union of love, though in the darkness of faith), so that when the clay jar of this life, which is all that impedes the light of faith, is broken, he may see God face to face in glory.<sup>1</sup>

Thus faith, by means of divinely infused sanctification, elevates the believer into cognitive union with God during the contingencies of the present, but it makes this union with the Light a permanent and perfected way of life in man's heavenly existence. It is an eschatological faith in the sense that it makes the eternal actualized and personalized in the now, and it prepares the way for the beatific life in the hereafter.

The "eternal" that is presently realized is not some abstract or impersonal aspect of the kingdom, nor is it only an ecstatic experience of visions, revelations, and interior feelings. It is, instead, an encounter with the Son of God Himself.

In that illumination of truths the Holy Spirit indeed communicates some light to the soul, yet the light given in faith--in which there is no clear understanding--is qualitatively as different from the other as is the purest gold from the basest metal, and quantitatively as is the sea from a drop of water. In the first kind of illumination, wisdom concerning one, two, or three truths, etc., is communicated; and in the second, all God's wisdom is communicated in general, that is, the Son of God, Who is imparted to the soul in faith.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 9, iii f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 29, vi.

This is seen also in the identification of the Word with the divine touches of infused contemplation. They are nothing less than personal encounters with the Eternal Logos.<sup>1</sup> The hope of faith, then, is not just a hope for beatific vision in the future, but it is the assurance of a real union with the Exalted Word now.

This leads the present discussion to another related theological element in John's eschatology which merits attention. It is the relation of word to being in his thinking.

One of the principal emphases in John's theology is the concept of auditive experience with God. His most frequently repeated Scripture is the Pauline phrase: "Faith cometh by hearing," and he dedicates entire sections of The Ascent and The Canticle to the discussion of spiritual voices, supernatural locutions, and divine revelations. His analysis of these phenomena is both critical and constructive, and it reveals a relation between the Being of God and God as Infinite Voice which is theologically significant.

The subject of supernatural locutions is divided by John into three distinct modes of communication: successive locutions, formal locutions, and substantial locutions.<sup>2</sup> The first of these refers to

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 2, xix.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 28, ii.

words or conclusions that one's spirit forms while in a state of active meditation. The second pertains to words or phrases which the spirit receives from someone else. The third locution is the production of words or phrases in one's spirit which cause in the substance of the soul the very power and essence of what they signify. In other words, this substantial locution is dynamic in its effect for it has the power to impress its meaning and action upon the soul. It is also distinct from the others in that it is received in complete passivity, for there is nothing that the mind or human spirit can do in order to bring about this experience.

The successive and formal locutions can be harmful to one's spiritual progress, according to John of the Cross, and he urges his readers not to desire them as an end in themselves. They are to transcend them for the purer and superior substantial communication from God. The successive locution is inferior because it contains an admixture of human reason with the divine words, and therefore is not fully divine.

The formal locution is also not the highest communication, because it involves the instrumentality of another person who may have received the communication either from God or the devil. The difficulty in discerning the source of this locution renders it subject to

suspicion, and not to be desired.<sup>1</sup>

But the divine communication which is spoken directly to the intellect without any admixture of human reason and apart from the necessity of any questionable intermediary, is the locution that brings joy. To this Voice the believer can only reply in happy submission: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."<sup>2</sup> The Voice in this auditive union of God with man is described by John as "Infinite Voice" (Voz Infinita),<sup>3</sup> for it is like the spiritual voice bestowed interiorly on the Apostles at Pentecost which was exteriorly heard as a rushing mighty wind in Jerusalem. Thus the external sound denoted symbolically what the Apostles received interiorly: "a fullness of power and strength."<sup>4</sup>

Another scriptural example of this interior voice communicating power and strength is cited by John from the Fourth Gospel. It is the occasion when Jesus received a divinely uttered message during His anguish just prior to the crucifixion events.<sup>5</sup> The exterior sound

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 29 & 30.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 30, ii (I Kings 3:10).

<sup>3</sup>Canticle 14-15, x f.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit., (John 12:27 f.).

that accompanied this deeply interior experience made the Jews think that it had thundered, and others thought an angel had spoken to Him. In reality, however, the Infinite Voice of God was communicating fortitude and might to the Christ in His humanity.

The significance of these divine communications for the present purpose is seen in their relation to God's Word and God's Being, for the Mystical Doctor leaves no doubt about their source and essence. According to him, "it is God Himself who communicates Himself by producing this voice in the soul,"<sup>1</sup> and in a subsequent paragraph he describes what is felt in the soul when the "Infinite Voice" is heard as "knowledge and a feeling of delight" (inteligencia y sentimiento de deleite).<sup>2</sup> This insight by John is not unlike the emphasis of Anselm when he distinguishes between dicere and intelligere in God,<sup>3</sup> and actually teaches that there is a locutio apud summam substantiam.<sup>4</sup> It is this Locutio or Voice in God that man must be brought to hear with his own spirit if he is really to be raised above the physical and

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 14-15, xi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 14-15, xiii.

<sup>3</sup>St. Anselm, Monologion, Cap. 60-63. S. Anselmi, Opera Omnia, Vol. I (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946), pp. 13-87.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., cap. 10-11.



sensible voices to the truth of God. The supernatural Locution of the Infinite Being must be spiritually perceived if man is to transcend the preternatural words, sounds, and utterances that occur to him in times of recollection and discursive meditation. Divine Word, Divine Locution, and Divine Voice for John of the Cross are not simply metaphorical terms to describe God's revelations and neither are they just exalted supernatural sayings received ecstatically or otherwise.<sup>1</sup> They are ontological expressions of God's very nature, and therefore are communications of His deity and essence.

It is for this reason that John of the Cross can identify so completely the "Touch of God" and the "Word of God." "The Word (Verbo) . . . is the Touch (Toque) which comes into contact with the soul,"<sup>2</sup> and in a similar context, he says: "the Touch (Toque) is the Son," and, "this is a touch of substances, that is, of the Substance of God in the substance of the soul."<sup>3</sup> The prayer John makes to Christ in the Living Flame of Love explicitly identifies Touch, Word, Son of God, and God's Being and Life.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 29, xxii.

<sup>2</sup>Flame 2, xix f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2, i and xxi.

"O You, delicate Touch, the Word, the Son of God, through . . . Your Divine Being, You subtly penetrate the substance of my soul and . . . absorb it entirely in Yourself."<sup>1</sup>

Still later he says: "This Touch . . . is indescribable insofar as it is substantial, that is from the Divine Substance. . . . The soul affirms this because in the taste of Eternal Life which it here enjoys, it feels the reward for trials. . . ."2

This identification of Touch and Word with the "Substance" of God denotes John's ontological interpretation of these encounters with God. The "Infinite Voice" in God reaches out as Eternal Word to "touch" man and lift him up into participation with the Triune God. Eschatologically this is again both a present foretaste and glorious "savor" of life in the eternal sphere, but it is also a hope to be fulfilled and a goal to be attained in the future. It is in this sense that John speaks of the two kinds of life:

One is beatific, consisting in the vision of God, which must be attained by natural death. . . . The other is the perfect spiritual life, the possession of God through union of love. This is acquired through complete mortification of all the vices and appetites and of one's own nature.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2, xvii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2, xxi and xxiii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2, xxxii.

In this latter life the Word and Touch are heard and felt respectively, but in the future life they are seen and enjoyed. John calls the present experience of the Voice of God an "awakening" which is "the communication of God's excellence to the substance of the soul" and one is made aware of this divine presence by an "immense and powerful voice"<sup>1</sup> that sounds in it, though in practice the voice is felt as a "soft and gentle touch."<sup>2</sup> In this way "God shows Himself gently" to the transcended soul and the Word becomes engrafted into the believer's life.

The Relation to Natural Theology. The doctrine of contemplation as propounded by John of the Cross is where his complete distrust in natural theology and his absolute confidence in the divine initiative as a means for bringing man and God together is brought into sharp focus.

For John, the problem with natural theology is both practical and theological. In his own experience the study of the natural aspects of the created order by discursive reasoning and abstractive logic did not elevate the intellect above the creaturely. Indeed, according to John, it could not, for even when the mind engages in supernatural revelations

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4, x.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2, xvii f.

and other types of preternatural experiences, the natural images and their creaturely content remain to distort, objectify, and otherwise remold whatever knowledge is received. The following paragraphs illustrate his views on this latter point:

. . . if the soul would then want to work, its activity would necessarily be no more than natural. On its own it can do no more, since a soul does not move itself to a supernatural work, nor can it, but God moves it and places it in this supernatural activity. If then a person were to desire to make use of his own efforts, he would necessarily impede by his activity the passive communication of God, which is the spirit. He would be engaging in his own work, which is of another and lower kind than that which God is communicating to him. The work of God is passive and supernatural, that of man active and natural. This natural activity of man is what would extinguish the spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Though in that communication or illumination itself there is actually no deception of the intellect, yet there can be and frequently is deception in the formal words and propositions the intellect deduces from it. That light is often so delicate and spiritual that the intellect does not succeed in being completely informed by it; and it is the intellect that of its own power, as we stated, forms the propositions. Consequently the statements are often false, or only apparent, or defective. Since the intellect afterwards joins its own lowly capacity and awkwardness to the thread of truth it had already begun to grasp, it easily happens that it changes the truth in accordance with this lowly capacity; and all as though another person were speaking to it.<sup>2</sup>

We mentioned the two reasons why, although God's visions and locutions are true and certain in themselves, they are not

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent III, 13, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 29, iii.

always so for us. The first reason is because of our defective manner of understanding them, and the second because their basic causes are sometimes variable. We shall give proof for both, with scriptural texts.

Clearly, in regard to the first, not all revelations turn out according to the literal meaning. The cause is that, since God is immense and profound, He usually embodies in His prophecies, locutions, and revelations other ways, concepts, and ideas remarkably different from the meaning we generally find in them. And the surer and more truthful they are, the less they seem so to us.

We behold this frequently in Scripture. With a number of the ancients, many of God's prophecies and locutions did not turn out as they had expected, because they interpreted them with their own different and extremely literal method. This is apparent in the following texts.<sup>1</sup>

The commentary on this subject continues for numerous pages in which John cites passage after passage from the Bible where God gave a special revelation and it was distorted, twisted, or completely misunderstood due to the tendency of man's intellect to naturalize the divine communication by literalism or some other form of nominalistic interpretation. Only one example of these illustrations from Holy Scripture can be included here, due to the limitation of space, but it will suffice to denote John's distrust in man's ability to interpret correctly a direct revelation from God. In the Saint's thinking, when supernatural knowledge is received by man, he is completely incapable of a

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 19, i.

correct interpretation of it through purely natural means.

Because many of the children of Israel took the words of the prophets literally and because these prophecies did not come true as expected, they began to disregard and distrust them. Hence a saying was born, becoming almost a proverb among them, by which they scoffed at the prophets. Isaias complains of this in the following passage: Whom will God instruct? And to whom will He explain His word and prophecy? Only to those who are weaned and fresh from their mother's breast. For everyone is saying--concerning the prophets--promise and promise again, wait and wait some more, a word with you here, a word with you there. For with words from His lips, but in another tongue, He will speak to this people. [Is. 28:9-11]

In this passage Isaias clearly demonstrates the mockery these people made of the prophets and the derision repeated in the proverb, "wait and wait some more." He indicates that the prophecies were never fulfilled because the people were bound to the letter (the milk of infants) and to the senses (the breasts), which run contrary to spiritual knowledge. Because of this he says: "To whom shall He teach the wisdom of His prophecies? And to whom shall He explain His doctrine, if not to those who are already weaned from the milk of the letter and the breasts of the senses? And because these people are not so weaned, they understand only according to the milk of the rind and letter, or to the breasts of the senses, for they exclaim: "promise and promise again, wait and wait some more, etc." God must speak doctrine to them from His mouth, and not theirs, and in a tongue other than theirs.<sup>1</sup>

The solution to this hermeneutical problem in John's experience is a complete abandonment of natural theology with its naturalistic hermeneutics as a means to understand God and His Word. John teaches

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 19, vi.

that all natural means for knowing God should be stilled absolutely to allow the pure, pristine presence of God to be experienced without the admixture of human wisdom and accomplishment. In practice, this requires a lifting of man out of his usual ways of thinking, remembering, and willing. Thus, since he is incapable of lifting himself up, a work of God is required to accomplish this miracle if man is to know the Creator. The lifting process is what John calls "divinely infused contemplation," and it represents his treatise against all forms of natural theology, and even a critique against humanly interpreted supernatural theology. The Mystical Doctor simply will not settle for an experience of God which is sifted or sieved down through creaturely strainers. In addition, he sees no hope in ascending to an ontological knowledge of God the Creator by means of the intellectual tools available to man, the creature. His hermeneutical mode, then, is pure passivity, and his theology is pure faith. The combination of these two epistemological elements is his doctrine of contemplation and sanctification.

## PART IV

### THE EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE UNION

#### Introduction

The Theological Significance of the Doctrine. The doctrinal significance and relevance of this present juncture in the study of John of the Cross is extremely important for two reasons. First, the teaching of divine union is the heart, purpose and goal of all of John's writings. It is the passion of his life, and all roads lead to it in his poetry, commentaries, and maxims. He will tolerate no short-cuts to realizing it, and once at the summit, he wants no cheap, sentimental substitute for the genuine experience of real "union with God," which he calls "the highest state attainable in this life."<sup>1</sup> No aspect of John's theology, and much less the total, can be comprehended apart from a thorough understanding of the purpose and content he gives to the term "divine union."

The second reason for a most thorough theological analysis possible of this doctrine is its soteriological significance because in the unitive experience that John of the Cross proclaims, the very soul

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 1, xi; 12, viii, and 22, iii.



of man is actually and substantially united with God while still in its present bodily existence. What greater hope could he hold out to man? What thought could be more re-creative for man's being and actions? What transformation could be more revolutionary for his worship, his knowledge, his affections, and his ethics? And yet this very type of ontological renovation with its moral and religious consequences is precisely that which is taught by John of the Cross as a potential reality for those who reach divine union.

The Dual Perspective of the Doctrine. It is noteworthy, too, at this point, that the vantage point from which one views the divine union experience has much to do with the manner in which it is reported by those who have experienced it. This is equally true of those third persons who purport to analyze the experience through only a study of the literary sources available. John of the Cross views the unitive experience from within it in the Spiritual Canticle and the Living Flame. These writings are necessarily, then, filled with more emotion, charged with more the dramatic, and expressed in more poetic terminology. On the other hand, the Mystical Doctor recognizes that this viewpoint is not sufficiently didactic for those who desire a pedantic outline of how he arrived at such a transcendental experience. For these "beginners" who aspire to becoming "proficients," John wrote the

Ascent-Dark Night volumes. Of course, the actual demarcation in the nature of these distinct classes of writing is not so precise, for there are didactic sections in the "interior writings," and there are deeply subjective paragraphs in the "exterior writings," and vice versa. But without a recognition of the different psychological viewing points from which John recounts the divine-human union, it is impossible to understand it properly.

The same principle applies in any hermeneutical exposition of the theological aspects involved in this doctrine. To properly evaluate John's teaching in respect to union with God, the interpreter is forced to include all of his writings, and to stand in John's involvement perspective at the time of composition to understand his expressional mode.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the Mystical Doctor's works do not lend themselves to the same principles of interpretation that apply to the more speculative theology of his day from which an evaluation could be adduced solely on the basis of logical precision and traditional orthodoxy. In the divine-union teaching of John of the Cross one is dealing

---

<sup>1</sup>This is the weakness of works which present the unitive experience from only one segment of John's writings rather than the whole. McMahon bases his study on the Ascent - Night and thereby neglects the trinitarian and reciprocal aspects of the union, which are principal elements in the doctrine. (Cf. McMahon, op. cit.)

more than in any place else in his theology with a kind of knowledge that was intuitively acquired and empirically assimilated. Neither the Aristotelian nor the Platonic molds will contain such knowledge, and, fortunately, it is not conformable to all the aprioristic patterns that have been eisegetically elaborated since John's death. The doctrine of divine union can be studied, but such study can never be finalized. Union with God ultimately is beyond complete analysis. It can only be contemplated, and therefore all examinations of its nature must be left open on the divine end for awe and reverence because eventually that union extends into the very Being of God and the eschaton itself. Human language of necessity breaks off into canticles of adoration on the Godward extreme of this doctrine, but the "amen" cannot be uttered until the veil of divine glory is lifted, and then, of course, the eschatological praise just begins.

Directional orientation. It is helpful also, to define the direction that the present study will take in clarifying the principal elements in John's experience and testimony relating to divine union. First, the basic underlying theological assumptions which the mystic himself enumerates as indispensable elements in the experience will be noted. They will serve as the practical bases for an objective interpretation of his teachings. After this, the doctrine of the divine-human union will be studied in the following topical order: (1) the

nature of the union, (2) the effective means of the union, and (3) the relative permanency and developmental aspects of the union.

### I. Basic Theological Assumptions Relative to Divine Union

In producing this literary account of the divine-human experience of union John is careful to note various theological assumptions which underlie the journey of contemplation and its destination called divine union. A brief understanding of these is necessary before proceeding to the analysis of the union itself.

#### The Distinctive Modes of Divine Union

The first of these basic assumptions is a clarification of the different modes of union with God. Fortunately for his readers, John dedicates an entire chapter to distinguishing between the two types of union which God has established with man.<sup>1</sup> The first of these he calls

---

<sup>1</sup>Stein and Frost, notwithstanding the clear teaching of John of the Cross, impose three modes of divine union into his theology. This results in making the third mode not only distinctive in degree from the mode of grace, but also distinctive in kind. The idea in Stein can be discounted, however, for she resorts to St. Teresa for her authority in the matter, and it is even doubtful that Theresa teaches a species of union with God which is beyond that of perfection in grace. Frost's interpretation can also be disregarded as decisive in the matter since he admits his eisegesis on this subject: "Here something must be added to St. John. . . ." Frost, op. cit., p. 242. (Cf. Theresa, Castle of

the "essential or substantial union," by which he means the general indwelling presence of God in every soul, even though it be that of the greatest sinner (del mayor pecador) in the world.<sup>1</sup> This, of course refers to God's immanence in creation, and by it he "conserves" man's being so that if the "substantial union" should ever end, mankind would be "annihilated and cease to exist."<sup>2</sup> John of the Cross clarifies that this ever-existent mode of divine union will not be the principal theme of his treatises, though, as will be noted subsequently, it does serve as a basis for the ontological and volitional union which he stresses with great emphasis.

This latter union John calls "the union of likeness."<sup>3</sup> It differs from the substantial union in that it does not exist universally in mankind; it is "supernatural"<sup>4</sup> (whereas the other is "natural"); and, it exists only "when God's will and the soul's are in conformity."<sup>5</sup> In both

---

the Soul, V.) Edith Stein, The Science of the Cross (London: Burns & Oates), 1960, pp. 125 ff.

<sup>1</sup> Ascent, II, 5, iii.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup> The word sobrenatural (supernatural) carries a heavy weight of distinctive meanings in John of the Cross. In this context it means that the union of likeness is a religious matter involving faith, whereas the substantial union is natural, i. e., where no faith is included.

<sup>5</sup> Loc. cit., volitional conformity is not a part of the substantial union.

unions God is "ever present in the soul," but He does not always communicate His supernatural Being to it. He shares Himself in this manner "only through love and grace and those who possess the Being of God do not have it" in the same degree.

The ontological basis, then, of this extraordinary experience of God about which John writes is the permanent presence of God in the substance of all souls through His work in creation. This divine indwelling is Trinitarian in essence, for, in John's words: "It should be known that the Word, the Son of God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is hidden by His essence and His presence in the innermost being of the soul."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the creative presence of the triune God in man is more than a general pantheistic relation to nature, but it is a special relation of divine preservation of man's creaturely existence. John calls this substantial union of God and man the "divine presence by divine essence."<sup>2</sup>

In this way He [God] is present not only in the holiest souls, but also in sinners. . . . For with this presence He gives them life and being. Should this essential presence be lacking to them, they would all be annihilated. Thus this presence is never wanting to the soul.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 1, vi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, iii.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

This substantial or essential indwelling of God is "hidden" or "secret,"<sup>1</sup> and the "good contemplative must seek Him with love" by deepest recollection and "regard all things (todas las cosas) as though they were nonexistent."<sup>2</sup> The recollection is not an introspective meditation on the inner goodness of man, but it is a seeking after God through His creative presence in the soul. It is the practice of empirical contemplation instead of an exercise in discursive reasoning or an existential leap into logical abstractions. It seeks to experience the fact of God's creative and dynamic presence in man rather than speculate about a rational theory for His existence.

The effect of empirical contemplation is to bring about gradually the union of God and man which John describes as an experience in the living flame of divine love. It is the ultimate in God's grace during man's earthly existence, and it represents what the Mystical Doctor calls "His presence by spiritual affection."<sup>3</sup> It is superior to all other stages of man's awareness of God and the highest analogy which John can employ in order to portray this union is that of marriage. It is

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame, 4, xiv.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle 1, vi.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 11, iii.

based on God's espousal to man which was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus, in explaining the gradual progress that the soul makes toward the "spiritual affection" presence of God, John says:

The espousal made on the cross is not the one we now speak of. For that espousal is accomplished immediately when God gives the first grace, which is bestowed on each one at baptism. The espousal of which we speak bears reference to perfection and is not achieved save gradually and by stages. For though it is all one espousal, there is difference in that one is attained at the soul's pace, and thus little by little, and the other at God's pace, and thus immediately.<sup>1</sup>

The transitional process from the substantial or creation union of God and man to the habitual or adoptive union begins with the grace of baptism, but the spiritual progress beyond this initial stage is the entire content of John's writings. It involves a radical transformation of the human intellect, memory, and will into a stage of complete conformity and likeness to the divine will through the supernatural operation of God's grace. The relation of the natural or creational relationship of God to man's creaturely union with Him and the supernatural or affectional relationship of God to man is illustrated by the following representative paragraphs from John's writings:

It is true that God is ever present in the soul, as we said, and thereby bestows and preserves its natural being

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 23, vi.



by His sustaining presence. Yet He does not always communicate supernatural being to it. He communicates supernatural being only through love and grace, which not all souls possess. And those who do, do not have it in the same degrees. God communicates Himself more to the soul more advanced in love, that is, more conformed to His will. A person who has reached complete conformity and likeness of will has attained total supernatural union and transformation in God.

Manifestly, then, the more a person through attachment and habit is clothed with his own abilities and with creatures, the less disposed he is for this union. For he does not afford God full opportunity to transform his soul into the supernatural. As a result, a man has nothing more to do than strip his soul of these natural contrarities and dissimilarities so that God who is naturally communicating Himself to it through nature may do so supernaturally through grace.<sup>1</sup>

The limitations and extent of this spiritual transformation which God effects in the soul through grace will subsequently be noted in greater detail, but the present context requires that the supernatural nature of the transition from the substantial union of God and man to the intense love union where there is uniformity of mind and will be pointed out. It is a work of God whereby He transforms and lifts the soul up into participation with Himself, which results in a sharing by man in the very light, life, and love of God through the initiative of divine grace and the infusing work of the Divine Spirit.

This distinction which John makes between man's substantial union and his transformative union with God is extremely significant as

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 5, iv. (Author's underlining.)

a basic assumption for understanding his doctrine of divine union, since it denotes the ontological foundation and the progressive nature of the unitive experience. Basically it is a union of grace that is both the outgrowth and goal of the substantial union. Far from teaching a third type of union which is superior to that communicated through "love and grace,"<sup>1</sup> John's whole theological system stems from the deepest tap roots of incarnational grace and love, and he knows nothing of a divine virtue that exceeds it in power and glory. The only hint of a distinctive union experience in John's theology which is different from that of substance and grace is the union which is effected as a part of the age to come and even this is but the eschatological extension of the union in grace begun in man's present time and space existence and ultimately rooted in God's creation presence in him by substantial union.

#### The Meaning Given to the Term "Habit"

Another relevant factor involved in the union of grace which is an integral part of the sub-structure and superstructure of John's

---

<sup>1</sup>Stein calls the third mode of divine indwelling the union of "mystical election." Theologically her misunderstanding of John appears to stem from a misconception of the relation of divine grace and election as separable aspects of divine operations. Cf. op. cit., pp. 132 ff. Kavanaugh and Rodriguez also give the idea of "two kinds of union" by their unfortunate translation of "estas dos maneras de union" (these two

realization of divine union is the place and meaning he gives to habit in his theology. He repeatedly teaches that the lack of conformity with God's will is not only a matter of overt acts, but is a matter of one's incorrect habits as well. "Not only must actual voluntary imperfections cease, but habitual imperfections must be annihilated, too."<sup>1</sup> An understanding of what John signifies by the term "habitual imperfections" is indispensable for a full appreciation of what he teaches in the nature of union with God.

In the modern mode, John is saying that to grow in the divine perfection which ultimately results in total union with God, one must systematically purify his thinking of all a priori concepts of God, and of all dependence on self-attainment. One must also be detached from all sensible objects whether real or imagined, religious or non-religious, and anything in his daily existential involvement which competes for his total devotion to God. Finally, he must accustom the mind (intellect

---

kinds of union) in the Flame 1, xvi. Cf. Kavanaugh and Rodríguez, op. cit., p. 585. John is speaking in this passage of two modes (maneras) of union within the one union of love, as the context and terms indicate. The distinction is one of degree, not of kind. Misinterpretations have also occurred at the point of John's differentiation between "the possession of God through grace in itself, and the possession of Him through union." (Flame 3, xxiv). Here again both relations are rooted in the Trinitarian union of love where, in fact, such distinctions are only gradational.

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 5, iv.

and memory) and heart (the affections and will) to meditate on God in such a manner that devotional habits are established which the Holy Spirit can use to effect in the soul the infused work of God called divine contemplation.

John is more concerned about the impediments caused to divine union by the inward habits of concept, precept and sentiment than he is by those of external action. Manifestly he deals with roots far more than with fruits which are, for him, the exteriorizing of man's corrupted spirit. Habits in the Mystical Doctor's theology, then, are the basic concepts, thoughts, motivations, and desires of the mind and heart which, in the final analysis, determine the degree of communion that God is able to have with each individual. It is in this perspective that one can more fully understand the following explanation by the saint:

. . . the more a person through attachment and habit is clothed with his own abilities and with creatures, the less disposed he is for this [total supernatural] union, for he does not afford God full opportunity to transform his soul into the supernatural. As a result, man has nothing more to do than strip his soul of these natural contrarities and dissimilarities so that God who is naturally communicating Himself to it through nature may do so supernaturally through grace.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

By way of summary, then, John of the Cross teaches only one union experience available to man in which God's very supernaturality or Being is communicated to him. It is the one union of love and grace which in actuality has three developmental stages: the initial union through the regenerative power of grace in baptism, the perfecting union through the sanctifying work of grace in contemplation, and the total union through the loving transformation of grace in spiritual marriage. These stages correspond roughly to the progressive aspects of biological growth: birth, development, maturity. In the developmental or sanctifying stage, which John calls "the dark night," radical changes of one's habits must occur if maturity is to be attained. These "habits" go deeper than just one's acts--they are the innermost modes of thought, desire, and memory in man. No complete union with God is possible until these are brought fully into conformity with His will and this status of the soul is called "habitual union" by John.<sup>1</sup>

#### Psychological Framework

One other basic assumption of John's theology which requires preliminary presentation is what Trueman Dicken aptly terms "the anatomy of the soul."<sup>2</sup> With the mystic Carmelite, divine union takes

---

<sup>1</sup>E. g. Canticle 36, iv.

<sup>2</sup>Dicken, op. cit., p. 327.

place in the soul, and it is the soul in all its senses, faculties, and substance that must be sanctified by purgation and infusement to properly prepare it for transformation into God's likeness. The terminology employed by John to express the various psychic elements in man's nature are those of his sixteenth century culture, and, consequently, they differ in signification and in extent from the psychological nomenclature in vogue today.

For instance, in peeling off all the outer rind of the soul to get to its inner substance, John speaks of the intellect as apprehending supernatural knowledge through two sources: the corporal and the spiritual. The corporal via of knowledge is sub-divided into that which originates through the exterior bodily senses and that received from the "interior bodily senses," (los sentidos corporales interiores) which includes everything the imagination can apprehend (comprender), feign (fingir), and fabricate (fabricar). In other words the role given by John to such powers of the soul as the imagination, the memory, the will, the intellect, and the soul's very substance is apt to confuse one who does not relate these terms to present-day concepts.

An entire book could be written on the soul's anatomy and functions in John's theology, but it appears to follow more closely the lines of the Platonic and Augustinian thought than that of Aristotle and

the Scholastics. Only the general divisions in the Mystical Doctor's psychosomatic concept can be indicated in this present study, but where further details and clarifications are required in the study of the divine union experience, they will be noted in the context or briefly outlined in a footnote.<sup>1</sup>

Broadly speaking, it can be said that John of the Cross teaches that man is fundamentally an unequal dichotomy of body and soul.<sup>2</sup> The structure and nature of the body do not concern John's writings, for to his way of thinking, the body is but the exterior mechanism in which the soul is housed and by which the soul executes its will, and receives and gives information about the created world. His doctrine on this point is not an opposing dichotomy in the Platonic sense, but a disparate dichotomy in which the soul is the superior element with the body subservient to it, though both are substantially a single entity united in the will.

---

<sup>1</sup>The chapter on this subject in Dicken's study is brief but complete enough to give a good preparation for understanding John's theology. Fortunately, Dicken's guide in this instance is the Mystical Doctor, rather than St. Theresa, who is less technical and therefore less explicit than John of the Cross. Cf. ibid., pp. 327-351.

<sup>2</sup>Sometimes the word spirit is used for soul, e. g., Flame, 1, x.

Within the soul itself there are two major divisions, according to the Mystical Doctor. One is the inferior or more animal element, and the other is the higher or rational part, or, what John frequently calls "the spirit" (el espiritu).<sup>1</sup> The distinction between these two aspects of the soul's make-up is not as great as these terms might indicate for, ontologically and volitionally, they are a psychic unity and function in continuity to form "only one suppositum."<sup>2</sup> The "night of the senses" in the first book of the Ascent corresponds to the purging of the animal or lower aspects of man's soul. In like manner, the "night of the spirit" is the purgation period directly related to the rational or higher strata of man's soul. Since this aspect of the human psychological anatomy is far more complex in John's thinking than that of the parte inferior, it is not surprising that he dedicates far greater attention and detail to its purification for the divine union.

---

<sup>1</sup>The spirit aspect of the soul should not be confused, however, with the trichotic idea of body, soul and spirit. With John the term is used to contrast the higher part (la parte superior) of the soul from the more mundane elements related to the senses (la parte sensitiva).

<sup>2</sup>This ontological unity applies more to the dichotic aspects of the soul than to soul and body union as Dicken deduces. Comp. Night II, 1, i, and Dicken, op. cit., p. 329.



The faculties of the lower part of the soul are sub-divided by John into two groups: (1) the exterior corporal senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) and (2) the interior corporal senses (the imagination, etc.). The first of these faculties receives its perception through the five bodily organs ordained to correspond to the soul's "sensible" needs and desires. The interior corporal sense is the seat of man's imagination, and in John's system it represents another source of perceptual knowledge, though it is limited in this respect to what can be conceptualized from sensory images.

The potencias, or faculties, of the soul's superior part (the spirit) are also spelled out by John of the Cross as: the intellect, the memory, and the will (El entendimiento, la memoria, y la voluntad). The first of these, the intellect, is primarily the receiver, correlator, and evaluator of acquired, deduced, and imagined knowledge in man's soul.<sup>1</sup> The memory is man's mental file cabinet where he retains concepts such as prejudices, dislikes, pre-conceptions, and other forms of pseudo knowledge as well as positive information on which to base

---

<sup>1</sup>Peers translates entendimiento as "understanding," and though it is a legitimate synonym, the word "intellect" is more frequent in the present study, due to its use in the Kavanaugh-Rodríguez translation.

relevant decisions. The will is man's decision-making apparatus whereby he controls and exercises his loves, affections, passions, and other capabilities, including, to some extent, the activities of the intellect and memory. These three, then--the intellect, memory, and will--though faculties of the soul, are called the spiritual part of the soul, or, simply, "the spirit." Thus the purgation of the spirit in his theology is not something separate from the soul, but is the self-denying habits and the cleansing of God's Spirit in the rational or upper part of the soul itself. The Mystical Doctor gives greater attention in The Ascent-Dark Night to the purgation of the intellect than he does to the memory and will. This is because of the intellect's fundamental relation to the other faculties, and of St. John's awareness of the epistemological difficulties involved in purifying the intellect of distorted, prejudiced, and a priori concepts. His systematic treatment and his psychological and spiritual insights in this purgation process are literary classics for mystical theology.

These, then, are the basic divisions in the Saint's concept of the soul's spiritual structure. He goes on in his writing to further classify the various powers (potencias) of each of these faculties. It would be a gross error, however, to conclude that John compartmentalizes to this degree all of his discussion about the soul. The above divisions are basic assumptions, but in presenting the

sanctifying and infusing work of God in each of these aspects of the soul, the saint is realistic and leaves ample room for the reciprocal inter-operations among the various psychological faculties. The semantic framework on which the mystical theology is hung is of the sixteenth century mode, but the abiding psycho-religious truths behind it are still of value in man's experience of God. John's solution to man's basic need is union with God. It is to this subject that the study can now be directed.

## II. The Nature of Divine Union

There are principally three conceptual modes for viewing the doctrine of divine union as taught by John of the Cross, viz., the theological, the metaphysical, and, the practical or psychological. These three modes are inseparable, of course, since the unitive experience of which John testifies is simultaneously theological, metaphysical, and psychological in its nature, operations, effects, and significance. However, in the analysis which follows, though it will be noted that all three modes form the backdrop for understanding John's doctrine, primary attention will be given to the theological aspects of the experience.

### Divine Union as a Progressive Transformation

Perhaps the most significant phrase that John of the Cross uses in referring to the divine union is the expression: "the union and transformation of the soul in God" (la unión y transformación del alma con Dios).<sup>1</sup> To expound the meaning of this expression John goes to great lengths not only to delineate the limitations and degree of the soul's transformation in God, but he also makes abundantly clear the nature of this change which takes place in man's inner being.

The Empirical Necessity of the Transformation. Fundamental to an understanding of divine union in the Mystical Doctor's theology are the following three concepts: (1) the creational or substantial presence of God in the soul, (2) the Fall of man and the resultant corruption of his nature coupled with the necessity for divine purgation of the soul, and, (3) the indispensability of uniformity between the divine

---

<sup>1</sup> Ascent II, 5, iii. The Spanish word con in this and similar passages is translated by Peers as with. Lexicographically Peers is correct, but the Kavanaugh translation (in) coincides theologically with the rest of John's unitive teachings, and is an accepted synonym for con. John himself uses en Dios (in God) at the close of the same paragraph, and, in fact, both words appear purposely chosen, since the union is a transformation in God's love, and it is a reciprocal transformation with God. It is not a transformation into God, which would have been a possible interpretation had he consistently used only the word en.

will and the human will if re-union of God and man is to be effected. The first two of these concepts have already been touched on in the present study, but the third one has not been examined sufficiently as yet.

According to John of the Cross, the original state of man in the Garden of Eden was one of continual union with God in which he lived in such a loving communion with the Creator that fruit from the tree of knowledge was not a necessity for him. The sensory and spiritual parts of his soul were ordered and pacified in such a way that his knowledge of created things was intuitively acquired through God and not vice versa.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, there originally existed a uniformity of the divine and human wills until the day that Adam chose to vitiate this harmony by deliberately selecting the path of secondarily acquired knowledge to that of direct intuitivity with God.

This same disruption of volitional uniformity between God and man has been the history of human existence through the centuries, and, until this basic union of the wills is restored, the affectional re-union of man and God cannot be realized. Or, to state it another way, until man is "willing" to sublimate his own knowledge and intellectual powers and return to direct dependence on God for intuitive guidance and wisdom,

---

<sup>1</sup>Night II, 24, ii.

the marriage union of man and God is impossible. These two theological concepts lie behind the fact that a large portion of John's teaching about the purgative via in the Ascent and Night is taken up with discussing the intellect and faith and scores of pages in the Canticle and Flame are dedicated to the transformation needed in the will and affections.

The Agent and Extent of the Transformation. The divine Agent of this progressive transformation of man's intellect and affections is the Holy Spirit, whose work John describes under the symbol of fire as "living flame of love." Thus, he says:

This flame of love is the Spirit of its Bridegroom, which is the Holy Spirit. The soul feels Him within itself not only as a fire which has consumed and transformed it, but as a fire that burns and flares within it, in glory and refreshes it with the quality of divine life. Such is the activity of the Holy Spirit in the soul transformed in love: the interior acts He produces shoot up flames for they are acts of inflamed love, in which the will of the soul united with that flame, made one with it, loves most sublimely.<sup>1</sup>

The Spirit's work in man's transformation is not done apart from the soul's volitional assent, for the transforming action is not produced by the Holy Spirit alone, but is "the work of both the soul and Him."<sup>2</sup> To illustrate this, John again uses the idea of a fire as it consumes a piece of wood.

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 1, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3, x.

It is like the air within the flame, enkindled and transformed in the flame, for the flame is nothing but enkindled air. The movements and splendors of the flame are not from the air alone, nor from the fire of which the flame is composed, but from both the air and the fire. And the fire causes the air, which it has enkindled, to produce these same movements and splendors.

We can consequently understand how the soul with the faculties is illumined within the splendors of God. The movements of these divine flames, which are the flickering and flaring up we have mentioned, are not alone produced by the soul that is transformed in the flames of the Holy Spirit, nor does the Holy Spirit produce them alone, but they are the work of both the soul and Him, since He moves it in the manner that fire moves the enkindled air. Thus these movements of both God and the soul are not only splendors, but also glorifications of the soul.<sup>1</sup>

The arrival at this sublime stage of the psychic transformation is preceded by a progression of developmental stages in which God raises the believer "degree by degree until he reaches divine union."<sup>2</sup>

The Spirit first proves and elevates the soul by first bestowing graces that are exterior, lowly, and proportioned to the small capacity of sense. If the person reacts well by taking these first morsels with moderation for his own strength and nourishment, God will bestow a more abundant and higher quality of food. If the individual is victorious over the devil in the first degree, he will pass on to the second; and if so in the second, he will go to the third; and likewise through all the seven mansions (the seven

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3, ix f.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Ascent II, 11, ix f.

degrees of love) until the Spouse puts him in the wine cellar of perfect charity. [Ct. 2:4]<sup>1</sup>

In the transformation experience a complete change is effected in the natural appetites and in all the various faculties, operations, and dispositions of the soul. No aspect of the sensitive and spiritual elements in man's nature is left untouched by this renovation in God-likeness which results in the union with Christ.

The intellect, which before this union understood naturally by the vigor of its natural light, by means of the natural senses, is now moved and informed by another higher principle of super-natural divine light, and the senses are bypassed. Accordingly, the intellect becomes divine, because through its union with God's intellect both become one.

And the will, which previously loved in a base and death-like fashion, only with its natural affections, is now changed into the life of divine love, for it loves in a lofty way, with divine affection, moved by the strength of the Holy Spirit, in which it now lives the life of love. By means of this union, God's will and the soul's will are now one.

And the memory, which by itself perceived only the figures and phantasms of creatures, is changed through this union so as to have in its mind the eternal years mentioned by David. [Ps. 76:6]

And the natural appetite, which only had the ability and strength to relish creatures (which causes death), is changed

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit. The reference to the "seven mansions" in this passage is the only one in John's writings and may represent one of the few allusions to Theresian terminology.



now so that its taste and savor is divine, and it is moved and satisfied by another principle: the delight of God, in which it is more alive. And because it is united with Him, it is no longer anything else than the appetite of God.

Finally all the movements, operations, and inclinations the soul had previously from the principle and strength of its natural life are now in this union dead to what they formerly were, changed into divine movements, and alive to God.<sup>1</sup>

In practice, this transformation is both an act and a habitual state. It first occurs as a "daybreak"<sup>2</sup> and becomes a habitual "state of love"<sup>3</sup> that occasionally bursts out into intense "acts" of love with God,<sup>4</sup> and can be realized plenarily only in the next life.<sup>5</sup> In the unitive experience, then, God continues "communicating Himself with admirable glory"<sup>6</sup> to the soul thus transformed. It is therefore a "state of perfection"<sup>7</sup> in which there are varying degrees of intensity, qualitative affection, and awareness of the divine self-giving.

The faculty principally affected by the transforming work of the Spirit is the will, since John thinks of man's will as being the door

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 2, xxxiv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 16, xv.

<sup>3</sup>Flame 1, iii and iv.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1, iii.

<sup>5</sup>Canticle 38, iii.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 26, iv.

<sup>7</sup>Ascent, Theme.

to the passive intellect and the seat of the affections. Thus, before the light of God can enter the mind, and before the love of God can be experienced fully in the heart, the will of man must be transformed into full conformity with God's will. "When the soul completely rids itself of what is repugnant and unconformed to the divine will, it rests transformed in God through love."<sup>1</sup>

. . . a man must strip himself of all creatures and of his actions and abilities (of his understanding, taste, and feeling) so that when everything unlike and unconformed to God is cast out, his soul may receive the likeness of God, since nothing contrary to the will of God will be left in him, and thus he will be transformed in God. . . . A person who has reached complete conformity and likeness of will has attained total supernatural union and transformation in God.<sup>2</sup>

The immediate experience of this volitional transformation in man is an extraordinary awareness of God's life, love, and light, which are supernatural manifestations of His very Being. Thus John says that in the Spirit's work of transformation, God so communicates "His supernatural being to it [the soul] that it appears to be God Himself and possesses all that God Himself has."<sup>3</sup> "The very loving light

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 5, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 5, iv; (author's underlining); cf. Flame I, xxvii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 5, vii.

and wisdom into which the soul is transformed is that which in the beginning purges and prepares it just as fire which transforms the wood by incorporating it into itself is that which first prepared it for this transformation. "<sup>1</sup>

The awareness of God's love in the transformation which takes place in divine union is more than the experience of the Father's care, but it is a participation in God's Being and in the very love relations which exist within His triune nature. John summarizes this empirical concept in the following manner.

. . . the soul here loves God, not through itself but through Him. This is a remarkable quality, for it loves through the Holy Spirit, as the Father and Son love each other according to what the Son Himself declares through St. John: That the love with which You have loved Me be in them and I in them. [Jn. 17:26] The second excellence is to love God in God, for in this union the soul is vehemently absorbed in love of God, and God in great vehemence surrenders Himself to the soul. The third excellence of love is to love Him on account of Who He is. The soul does not love Him only because He is generous, good, and glorious to it, but with greater force it loves Him because He is all this in Himself essentially.<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that in John's experience there is no permanent possession of this sublime experience while the soul is yet fulfilling its bodily existence here on earth, but a permanent union with God in

---

<sup>1</sup>Night II, 10, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Flame 3, Lxxxii.

the present can be maintained on the habitual level through faith. In other words, there must always remain for man some degree of cognitive distance between him and perfect cognitive union with God while he is yet held within the limitations of the flesh. He may experience many present anticipations of the full sharing in God's relations which is reserved for the future life of beatific existence, but for now these foretastes of glory can be referred to only as "touches" or "flames" that penetrate the innermost depths of the believer's being. John identifies the "touches" with Christ as the Word (Verbo),<sup>1</sup> which can in no way be circumvented or superceded by preternatural visions or other types of supernatural locutions, revelations, or dreams.<sup>2</sup> The "flames" he identifies with the Holy Spirit in His cautory and illuminative functions as He simultaneously burns and gives off light through the transformed soul.<sup>3</sup>

The complete transformation for which the soul longs is clearly a part of John's eschatological teachings. Accordingly, union of the divine and human wills and intellects is possible in this life, but eternal union by a permanent and actual ontological oneness is a part

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2, i.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 22, iii.

<sup>3</sup>Flame I, ii.

of the future hope. The transformation necessary for continual communion is possible in man's present earthly existence, but the absolute transformation for permanent union with God awaits the liberation of the soul from its bodily prison at death.<sup>1</sup>

Limitations of the Transformation. To avoid misconceptions that might lead to an interpretation of his teachings as a form of absorptionism or deification, John of the Cross clarifies the limitations of the transformation in each of his books. For example, in The Ascent-Night he writes: ". . . it [the soul] is God by participation. Yet truly, its being (even though transformed) is naturally as distinct from God's as it was before. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Toward the end of the Spiritual Canticule while expounding the sublimities of the transformation of the soul into God by love, he says:

The bread of love joins and binds God and the soul so strongly that it unites and transforms them. So great is this union that even though they differ in substance, in glory, and appearance, the soul seems to be God and God seems to be the soul.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3, lxxviii f.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 5, vii and viii (author's underlining). The problem of deification is dealt with in greater detail in the ontological elements of divine union.

<sup>3</sup>Canticule 31, i (author's underlining).

Again, in The Living Flame, where he reaches his most transcendent doctrine concerning the advanced degrees of the union experience in love, John sums up the totality of the unitive process with these words:

Accordingly, the intellect of this soul is God's intellect; its will is God's will; its memory is the memory of God; and its delight is God's delight; and although the substance of this soul is not the substance of God, since it cannot undergo a substantial conversion into Him, it has become God through participation in God, being united to and absorbed in Him as it is in this state.<sup>1</sup>

To clarify further the ontological aspects of this union, John adds two illustrations to show the difference between union by likeness and loss of identity by absorption, deification, or ontologism. The first of these speaks of a ray of sunlight shining through a clean window in which, to all appearances, the glass is transformed and made identical with the sunlight, but in reality the window is distinct in its nature and essence from the sun's rays.<sup>2</sup> The second illustration is similar and also relevant for avoiding possible misinterpretations of his theology. He compares the soul to a star or candle which retain their light at mid-day, and, though neither the star nor the candle loses its substance or changes its identity, it is only their purpose and function that are

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 2, xxxiv (author's underlining).

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 5, vi.

absorbed into the greater light of the sun.<sup>1</sup> Thus "the union wrought between the two natures and the communication of the divine to the human in this state [or transformation] is such that even though neither change their being, both appear to be God."<sup>2</sup>

Summarily, then, the dissimilarity between God and man in the transformation experience of which John speaks, is that of man's creatureliness and God's aseity, and the "likeness" in what he calls the "union of likeness" is a volitional and operational similarity as well as man's participation in the Divine Nature through his adoptive relationship with God. The development of these teachings by John is the subject of the sections which follow.

#### The Moral and Volitional Elements of Divine Union

Divine Love Related to the Will. The basic element in the nature of the divine union is the transformation of the soul in God's love. The principal illustration that John uses to teach this fact is the unifying process of spiritual courtship, betrothal, marriage, and affectional intensity in the marital state. This love must be based on a

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 22, iii (author's underlining).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 22, iv (author's underlining).

conformity of the two wills involved and, to the degree that such a union of the wills is realized, the other aspects of divine union are effected.<sup>1</sup>

Man's problem, however, is that he does not love unselfishly, and, what is worse, his will is already filled with affection for things other than God. But God loves perfectly, and, as was noted previously, He infuses the "willing" soul with "divine contemplation" which, for man's volitional faculties, signifies a purgation of the affections and an infilling of God's love. It is not so simple, however, because the "willing" soul proves its affirmative disposition by enduring the privations, sufferings, detachments, and "spiritual dryness" that are a part of the purgative elements of divine contemplation. But once the stage is attained in the sanctifying process, when there is emptiness of self, complete conformity to God's will,<sup>2</sup> and an elevation of the soul above all the sensory and rational parts of nature,<sup>3</sup> the transformation of the soul in God takes place.

Divine Love: The Ontological and Moral Content of Union.

The purgation of the substance and faculties of the soul which is the basis of this extensive transformation is grounded in the sovereignty

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame I, xxvii.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 5, iv.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 4, ii.



and love of God, so that, though the union is not actually one of substances, it is one which involves the very essence of God's nature--namely His love. God communicates His own Being to the purified soul in such a way that the Divine Love envelops it, transforms it, and, without the soul losing its creaturely nature, it becomes through participation what God is. It is in the light of this transcendent concept that passages in John of the Cross which apparently teach divine human oneness must be understood. Thus in expounding on the nature of divine union he says:

This renovation is: an illumination of the human intellect with super-natural light so that it becomes divine, united with the divine; and informing of the will with love of God so that it is no longer less than divine and loves in no other way than divinely, united and made one with the divine will and love; and also a divine conversion and change of the memory, the affections, and the appetites according to God. And thus this soul will be a soul of heaven, heavenly and more divine than human.<sup>1</sup>

St. John's language is still more explicit when he discusses the trinitarian elements of the divine communication in the union transformation, where the soul breathes in God as the Son and Father reciprocally breathe the Holy Spirit. He states that:

One should not think it impossible that the soul be capable of so sublime an activity as this breathing in God, through

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, II, 13, xi.

participation as God breathes in her. For, granted that God favors her by union with the Most Blessed Trinity, in which she becomes deiform and God through participation, how could it be incredible that she also understand, know, and love--or better that this be done in her--in the Trinity, together with it, as does the Trinity itself! Yet God accomplishes this in the soul through communication and participation. This is transformation in the three Persons in power and wisdom and love, and thus the soul is like God through this transformation. He created her in His image and likeness that she might attain such resemblance.<sup>1</sup>

The terms "deiform" and "God" in this passage refer directly to the extent to which the transformation into God-likeness is effected. Extreme caution must be exercised in noting these words out of their more lengthy contexts for John's purpose at this point is only to stress the effect of the actual communication of Divine Love in the union relationship and not to teach human deification or absorptionism. These complex stages of the transformative experience in John's theology require further elucidation since they represent the depths and heights of the Divine Union.

The theological presentation which John makes of the progress in affectional oneness that takes place between God and the human soul can be summarized in the following seven phases:

1. In communicating His Trinitarian Being to the soul as Love, sovereignly subjects Himself, in a manner, to the

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 34, iii.

person with whom He unites Himself. In other words, the soul actually possesses the Love and is actually possessed by the Love that is God's Being, or else the union would only be a relational, one-sided experience which, in reality, would be no union at all.

2. In reciprocating the divine love, the soul and God thus mutually possess each other in a transforming interchange which John calls participation (participación). By this term he means that the soul and God partake of each other in the union experience and thereby the soul is made to share in God's very Being insofar as it is possible in this life. (El alma esta hecha divina y Dios por participación cuanto se puede en esta vida.)<sup>1</sup> "So great is this union that even though they differ in substance, in glory and appearance the soul seems to be God and God seems to be the soul."<sup>2</sup>

3. The transformation which the union in divine love effects

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 22, iii. The Kavanaugh translation of this passage is regrettable, since the authors do not clearly show the distinction in Spanish between the verbs ser and estar. If John were saying that the soul is deified, he would have said "es hecha divina y Dios," but Spanish readers of his writings would know that his use of estar hecha is less ontological in meaning and carries more the idea of man's sharing in God's deity rather than becoming it.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 31, 1.

also results in a mutual indwelling of the soul in God and of God in the soul. This is possible because:

. . . in the union and transformation of love each gives possession of self to the other, and each leaves and exchanges self for the other. Thus each one lives in the other and is the other, and both are one in the transformation of love.<sup>1</sup>

4. Such reciprocal indwelling has ontological and Christological significance in that it is identical with the Pauline experience when the Apostle says: "Christ lives in me."<sup>2</sup>

In commenting on this, John of the Cross states:

In saying, I live, now not I, he [the Apostle Paul] meant that, even though he had life it was not his, because he was transformed in Christ, and it was divine more than human. He consequently asserts that he does not live, but that Christ lives in him. In accord with this likeness and transformation, we can say that his life and Christ's were one life through union of love.<sup>3</sup>

5. The life of Christ in the soul is the operation of the Holy Spirit in which he capacitates it for breathing the very spiration of love that the Father breathes in the Son and the Son in the Father. The essence of this divine spiration is the

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 12, vii.

<sup>2</sup>Galatians 2:20.

<sup>3</sup>Canticle, 12, viii.

Holy Spirit Himself, "who in the Father and the Son breathes to her [the soul] in this transformation in order to unite her to Himself."<sup>1</sup> Such is the fulfillment of Christ's high priestly prayer when he said:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.<sup>2</sup>

The Father loves them by communicating to them the same love He communicates to the Son, though not naturally as to the Son, but, as we said, through union and transformation of love. It should not be thought that the Son desires here to ask the Father that the saints be one with Him essentially and naturally as the Son is with the Father, but that they may be so through the union of love, just as the Father and the Son are one in essential purity of love.<sup>3</sup>

6. Not only does the union experience become the very life of Christ in the soul through its mutual participation with God in the spiration of Love, but it also means that, to a degree limited by the soul's present embodiment, it is given to possess

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 39, iii.

<sup>2</sup>John 17:20-23.

<sup>3</sup>Canticle, 39, v.

the same goods by this participation that the Son possesses by nature.<sup>1</sup> "As a result they [the souls in such possession] are truly gods by participation, equals, and companions of God."<sup>2</sup>

7. The total perfection of the transforming experience into union with God awaits the "tearing of the third veil" which is the soul's translation into the next life of beatific vision and ontological fulfillment in God. Accordingly, the reciprocity

---

<sup>1</sup>The same goods: esos mismos bienes (Canticle 39, vi). Peers translates bienes as "blessings." The word is difficult to synonymize in this context because of its general nature in Spanish and because it is frequently associated with material things such as real estate, securities, etc. John probably chose the word selectively in this case to leave the idea general rather than specific. Fr. Luis de San José gives grounds for avoiding any definition of these "goods" by classifying the passage with the bienes celestiales (heavenly goods). Concordancias de las Obras y Escritos del Doctor de la Iglesia San Juan de la Cruz (Burgos: Tipografía de "El Monte Carmelo," 1948), p. 153. Actually the context does clarify the matter to a degree, since the "goods" are those which can correspond only to the divine nature and which capacitate the soul to co-labor with God in the execution of the "work of the Most Blessed Trinity." (Canticle, 39, vi). A parenthetical explanation in the Flame also leaves the matter in the vagueness of God's nature. "A reciprocal love is thus actually formed between God and the soul, like the marriage union and surrender, in which the goods of both (the divine essence which each possesses freely by reason of the voluntary surrender between them) are possessed by both together." (Flame, 3, lxxix).

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 39, vi.

of "divine love,"<sup>1</sup> "divine spiration,"<sup>2</sup> and "divine goods"<sup>3</sup> between God and the soul is but a "foretaste and noticeable trace"<sup>4</sup> of the future heavenly union while yet in this life, but "in the next life this will continue unintermittently in perfect fruition."<sup>5</sup>

### The Cognitive Elements of Divine Union

Still another significant aspect involved in the nature of the unitive experience is the loving knowledge which God communicates in the divine-human participation in each other. The will of man is divinely transformed into complete conformity with the will of God, and thus the volitional union of the soul and God is effected. But what of the intellect? Is it left purged and set aside in emptiness, or is there an epistemological phase of divine union which is a part of the essence of the experience?

The Mode of Cognitive Infusion. To answer these questions, an analysis of John's teaching regarding God's method of communicating

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 39, xiv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 39, iv.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 39, vi.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Flame 3, lxxix.

His kind of knowledge into the human experience will denote the role of the intellect, the Word, and the Spirit, and the relation of divine knowledge to the substance of the experience itself.

The manner in which God communicates Himself to the contemplative has been discussed previously as a part of the contemplation process toward divine union. The term that John consistently uses to refer to this loving communication by God is toques, or "divine touches." These supernatural awarenesses of God are not "felt" or "tasted" directly through the intellect, and much less are they apprehended through the corporal or spiritual sensorial faculties.<sup>1</sup> They are not visions or lights, or phantasies in the imagination, but are experiences of "supreme knowledge of God" which "are not applied immediately to the intellect but to the will" and "the substance of the soul."<sup>2</sup> In other words, the nature of the knowledge determines the mode of its reception, and since these toques are received passively in the soul, it follows that God sovereignly communicates the knowledge of Himself to the intellect by way of the will, because the will is man's faculty of volitional love, and it is precisely Himself as Divine Love and Light which God

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 7, iv. Dicken significantly relates this mode of knowledge reception to intuition. Dicken, op. cit., p. 371.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 32, iii.



communicates. "This sublime knowledge can be received only by a person who has arrived at union with God, for it is itself that loving union."<sup>1</sup>

This supernatural infusion of divine knowledge is not to be confused with the light of natural reason, but it is, instead, a sovereign work of God whereby He "illuminates the soul with the ray of His divine light."<sup>2</sup> The means whereby He effects this illumination of the human intellect is faith, which John of the Cross defines as "a certain and obscure habit of the soul" because it brings man to believe "divinely revealed truths which transcend every natural light and infinitely exceed all human understanding."<sup>3</sup> By means of this faith, the believer is able to "penetrate into the deep things of God"<sup>4</sup> and "remove everything in the intellect and the senses" which is of human attainment.<sup>5</sup> The less a soul works in its own abilities, the more securely it proceeds toward cognitive union with God because its progress in faith is greater.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, then, the light of man's natural knowledge does not and cannot show him the object of faith, since God is unproportioned

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 26, v.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 2, i.

<sup>3</sup>Ascent II, 3, i.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 1, i.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 1, ii.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., II, 1, iii.

to natural reason and the ordinary senses.<sup>1</sup> The light of faith "nullifies,"<sup>2</sup> "suppresses,"<sup>3</sup> "overwhelms,"<sup>4</sup> "darkens,"<sup>5</sup> and "eclipses"<sup>6</sup> the light of natural reason, and "if this light is not darkened, the knowledge of faith is lost."<sup>7</sup> "Si non credideritis, non intelligetis."<sup>8</sup>

From these passages, it is clear that John of the Cross regards faith as the only means of man's cognitive union with God. They indicate, too, the utter impossibility of confusing divinely infused knowledge with any type of knowledge acquired through the natural light of reason. A radical transformation in man's entire mode of thinking is required for God's "loving knowledge" to enter the intellect and this transformation "is something that falls beyond the reach of the senses and of human capability," for it is "above nature" in its effects and content.<sup>9</sup> However, whenever God gives His supernatural communications by means of a cognitive union with man, the recipient must live "as though denuded of them and in darkness. Like a blind man, he must lean on dark faith, accept it for his guide and light, and

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 3, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 3, iv.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 3, i.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 1, i.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., II, 3, i.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., II, 3, iv.

<sup>8</sup>Loc. cit. (Isaiah 7:9).

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., II, 4, ii.

rest on nothing of what he understands, tastes, feels, or imagines,"<sup>1</sup> for, however impressive one's knowledge or feeling of God may be, "it will have no resemblance to God,"<sup>2</sup> since the most that man can experience of God in this life is "infinitely distant from God and the pure possession of Him."<sup>3</sup> The sign that assures the believer that the soul is ready to be occupied with God's "loving knowledge" is when the intellect is "abstracted from any particular, temporal or spiritual knowledge" and is "unwilling to think of either."<sup>4</sup> The experience of this supernatural knowledge in the soul is the awareness of a light which is both loving and purging in its effects.<sup>5</sup>

The Nature and Effects of Cognitive Union. At the heart of this knowledge is the dynamic of God's transforming love, for "it consists in a certain touch of the divinity produced in the soul, and thus it is God Himself who is experienced and tasted there."<sup>6</sup> John further clarifies the matter by naming the Word, (Logos) the Son of God, as the Communicator and Content of the knowledge that comes through union with

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 4, iii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 4, iv.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 14, xiv.

<sup>5</sup>Flame 2, ii.

<sup>6</sup>Ascent II, 26, v, and Canticle 36, vii.

God.<sup>1</sup> The Son reveals to the soul "sweet mysteries of His Incarnation and of the ways of the Redemption of mankind, which is one of the loftiest of His works, and thus more delightful to the soul."<sup>2</sup> He also shares the sublime and deep mysteries of:

. . . God's wisdom in Christ, in the hypostatic union of the human nature with the divine Word, and in the corresponding union of men with God, and the mystery of the harmony between God's justice and mercy with respect to the manifestations of His judgments in the salvation of the human race.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the content of the knowledge that the Son imparts is none other than Himself.<sup>4</sup> It is the "wisdom and beauty" of Christlikeness which is begun in the transformation of the soul in this life, and which is brought to complete fruition in the next life to such an extent that the beauty of the Son will be possessed by the soul, and the Son, too, will be able to see His own beauty in the soul and be glorified in it.<sup>5</sup>

But,

. . . however much the soul hides herself, she will never in this mortal life attain to so perfect a knowledge of these mysteries as she will possess in the next. Nevertheless,

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame, 2, xvii.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 23, i.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 37, iii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 36, vii.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 36, v.

if like Moses she hides herself in the cleft of the rock (in real imitation of the perfect life of the Son of God, her Bridegroom), she will merit that, while God protects her with His right hand, He will show her His shoulders (Ex. 33:22-23), that is, He will bring her to the high perfection of union with the Son of God, her Spouse, and transformation in Him through love.<sup>1</sup>

It is here in the context of the cognitive union between God and man that John of the Cross places such great stress upon the divine communication to the intellect as the soul's participation in the supra-rational (but not extra-rational) Light of eternal wisdom. One of the most dominant symbols in his theology is the figure of Light as both the content and effect of union with God. Thus he emphasizes the purging effect of the light from above as it strikes the soul, and he also points out the illuminating content that is felt. "The light is never lacking in the soul,"<sup>2</sup> due to man's natural relation with God, but because of "creaturely forms and veils weighing upon it and covering it,"<sup>3</sup> the light is never comprehended. If the impediments and veils are eliminated through contemplation, and, if the soul lives in "pure nakedness and poverty of spirit," it will then be transformed immediately into the simple and pure Wisdom the Son of God. Thus, as confidence

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, x.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 15, iv.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

in natural reason is substituted by faith in God, and as all previously acquired ideas and concepts of God are rendered dormant and impotent, the divine communications of God "are naturally and supernaturally infused, since there can be no void in nature."<sup>1</sup>

As is noted above, this cognitive infusion produces two principal effects in the soul: "it prepares the soul for the union with God through love by: (1) purging it and (2) illumining it."<sup>2</sup> This is John's "dark night of the soul," and though the expression appears paradoxical, it is his manner of teaching both the transcendence of divine wisdom which exceeds the capacity of the soul to contain it, and the baseness and impurity of the soul to receive it. Here he quotes Aristotle as saying: ". . . the clearer and more obvious divine things are in themselves, the darker and more hidden they are to the soul naturally."<sup>3</sup> Thus, the more one looks at the sun, the more he is blinded by the extremes of light, and at the same time, it gives man his energized life.

. . . even though this happy night darkens the spirit, it does so only to impart light concerning all things; and even though it humbles a person and reveals his miseries, it does so only to exalt him; and even though it impoverishes and empties him

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Night II, 5, i.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 5, iii.

of all possessions and natural affection, it does so only that he may reach out divinely to the enjoyment of all earthly and heavenly things, with a general freedom of spirit in them all.<sup>1</sup>

The radical nature of the divine light's effect in the soul is described by John as a "renovation" which divinizes the intellect, will, and memory.<sup>2</sup> He summarizes this as a work of God on earth which is like the "loving wisdom that purges and illumines the blessed spirits" in the life to come.<sup>3</sup>

One of the distinctive elements in John's concept of mystical revelation is the unity he sees in God's light and God's love. These two elements are inseparable in his concept of divine union, and thus he is forced to speak continually of "the Science of love," "the loving wisdom," or "the wisdom of love" rather than using nature mysticism's more sterile phraseology. In this sense, God's communications to the soul both "illumine and enamour" it as they elevate man's thinking "step by step unto God."<sup>4</sup> This gives a more ontological nature to John's concept of light, for his three principal symbols for God are Life, Light,

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 9, i.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 13, xi.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 5, i.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 17 and 18.

and Love, the latter of which is the very essence of the Trinity. God is love, and He manifests Himself in life-giving love and light, for by infused contemplation "God in one act is communicating light and love together, which is loving supernatural knowledge."<sup>1</sup> "Love is present in the will in the manner that knowledge is present in the intellect."<sup>2</sup> Divine union is thus a cognitive and volitional union of the human soul with the Logos.

In the cognitive union man's knowledge which he rationally acquired through his knowledge of sciences is not destroyed, but is brought to perfection even though in comparison to the "loving wisdom of God" this natural knowledge is ignorance. "The natural sciences themselves and even the works of God, when set beside what it is to know God, are like ignorance for where God is unknown, nothing is known."<sup>3</sup> The supernatural infusion of divine light causes an unknowing in the intellect with regard to naturally acquired knowledge, but this does not mean that because the soul remains in this state that it loses all former knowledge received sensorily or discursively.

These latter "habits are perfected by the more perfect habit of supernatural knowledge infused in her. Yet these

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 3, xlix.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Canticle 26, xiii.



habits do not reign in such a way that the soul must use them in order to know; though at times it may still use them, as this supernatural knowledge does not impede their use. For in this union with divine wisdom these habits are joined to the superior wisdom of God. When a faint light is mingled with a bright one, the bright one prevails and is that which illumines. Yet the faint light is not lost, but rather perfected, even though it is not the light which illumines principally.

Such, I believe, will be the case in heaven. The habits of the acquired knowledge of the just will not be supplanted, but they will not be of great benefit either, since the just will have more knowledge through the divine wisdom than through these habits.<sup>1</sup>

The pathway to cognitive union with God, then, is faith and faith alone, for "the intellect cannot understand the nature of God," and "must journey in submission to Him (faith) rather than by understanding, and thus it advances by not understanding." In daily practice, this means that the mind should "avoid busying itself with particular knowledge" since it cannot reach God through this means.<sup>2</sup>

But union with God is more than intellectual union, and more than volitional union. It is the very substance of God touching the substance of the soul, and the ontological aspects of the divine light and love in man's soul require a separate consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 26, xvi.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

### The Ontological Elements of Divine Union

As a final step in the consideration of the nature of the unitive experience as taught by John of the Cross, the ontological elements of this union require thorough consideration. The moral and volitional aspects have been noted above, and the cognitive and operational elements have also received attention, but the extent to which the union is a union of God's Being with man's being is theologically significant also.

The dangers for John of the Cross at this juncture are serious, for on the one hand his theology is easily suspect of deifying human nature, and on the other hand he can also be accused of losing human nature by divine absorption. That John teaches a kind of deification of man cannot be denied, and that he frequently employs the term absorption when referring to man's soul is equally factual. No analysis of his works can be complete without a critical assessment of his teachings in this regard.

The Mystical Doctor appears to be conscious of the serious dangers involved, and actually inserts statements in his writings to protect himself from the charge of deificationism and absorptionism. Some of these precautionary statements have been alluded to previously in this study where the analysis was made of the limitations relative to

the supernatural transformation that takes place in man as a part of the divine union experience. But the problem extends over the whole gamut of John's theology, due to his persistent emphasis on the experience of God out of His very Being. The Saint knows of no knowledge or awareness of God which is not fully ontological in content and fully divine in essence. His experience of the Light of God (cognitive union) and the Love of God (moral and volitional union) is an experience of the very Life and Being of God (i. e., ontological union). Thus the danger of deification and divine absorption is an ever-present factor in John's elucidation of divine-human union.

References Relating to Deification and Absorption. The passages in John's writings which refer to deification and absorption may be divided into two general classifications:--those which explicitly teach a kind of soul divinization and absorption, and those which John specifically includes to refute the heresy of any substantial loss in man's creaturely nature. Since the Saint clearly teaches against the idea of a union of substances between God and man, these references will be noted first, and others will be analyzed subsequently in the light of these.

Passages in which John emphasizes the irrevocable distinction between God's essence and man's are too numerous to all be included at this point, but representative statements by John will be noted and their

context indicated. For example, in the early part of The Ascent the Carmelite Saint states that although the soul becomes God by participation, "yet truly, its being (su ser) even though transformed is naturally distinct from God's Being. . . ." <sup>1</sup> The practical illustration which John uses to illucidate this idea is the analogy of the ray of sunlight which passes through a window. Thus, just as the glass appears to be transformed into a shaft of sunlight, and indeed it is this by participation, it nonetheless "has an existence distinct from the ray." <sup>2</sup>

Actually, this simple and mundane comparison is frequently referred to by John as illustrative of the substantial interpenetration which takes place in divine union. For him, the sunlight absorbs all of the glass that is clean, and the glass is wholly transformed into an object of great light to the degree that it becomes fully suffused with the sun's rays. The light participates in the nature of the window, and the window, in a sense, participates in the substance of the light. But the point that John is emphasizing here is that the glass never becomes sunlight, and the sunlight never reverts to glass in their essences, although in fact they appear to be in perfect union.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 5, vii (author's underlining).

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit. (author's underlining).

In the spiritual marriage analogy John again stresses that the union of the soul and Christ is so great that "even though they differ in substance, in glory and appearance the soul seems to be God and God seems to be the soul."<sup>1</sup> Thus the inner faculties of the soul, the intellect, the memory, the will, the affections, the appetites, etc., are, to all appearances, deified in their purpose and operations, but the inner substances of God and the soul remain distinct, for one is the Eternal Creator and the other is the creature. The Bridegroom is always the Bridegroom by nature, and the bride is always the bride by her nature. They do not exchange natures, nor does one absorb the other. They do share a reciprocal love, and their cognitive union, and volitional union is a reality but they do not cease to be what they are and who they are.

In one of the most significant explanatory passages where John of the Cross elucidates his concept of the soul becoming divine, he inserts the usual precaution against any tendency to interpret his teaching as a substantial deification of man in the divine union experience. Thus in commenting on Jesus' prayer in St. John's Gospel<sup>2</sup> he says:

It should not be thought that the Son desires here to ask the Father that the saints be one with Him essentially and

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 31, i (author's underlining).

<sup>2</sup>John 17. Cf. Canticle 39, v.

naturally as the Son is with the Father, but that they may be so through the union of love just as the Father and the Son are one in essential unity of love.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of this precaution by John is seen in the distinction it reveals in his own thinking between Christ's natural deity and man's participatory deity. The deity of the Son is natural in that He is eternally begotten by the Father, and His essence is therefore identical with that of the Father in that both are God. But with man's divine sonship, the matter is different, for he receives his divine nature not naturally but supernaturally by spiritual participation in the deity of the Trinity. He participates in the very Substance of God by means of the elevative and penetrative work of the Spirit, but, like the Son who retained His deity while becoming Son of Man, man does not lose his humanity while being made a son of God. John admits that "no knowledge or power can describe how this happens, unless by explaining how the Son of God attained and merited such a high state for us, the power to be sons of God, as St. John says. [John 1:12]."<sup>2</sup>

The final precautionary reference which can be included here, though there are many more, is one from the almost ecstatic vocabulary

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit. (author's underlining).

<sup>2</sup>Canticle 39, v (author's underlining).

of the Living Flame where John seems to be writing while in the very experience of union with God's Being. Accordingly he says:

. . . the intellect of this soul is God's intellect; its will is God's will; its memory is the memory of God; and its delight is God's delight; and although the substance of this soul is not the substance of God, since it cannot undergo a substantial conversion into Him, it has become God through participation in God, being united to and absorbed in Him, as it is in this state.<sup>1</sup>

Here again the language of John is emphatic and absolute.

Man's soul "cannot undergo a substantial conversion" in God, but the deification or divine sonship which actually is effected in man is made possible through "participation," "union," and "absorption" in God and not by any divinization of man's humanity whereby his creatureliness is lost in the sea of God's deity or whereby his human nature is overpowered and replaced by the divine.

The Scripture passage which John cites in support of this concept is St. Paul's statement: "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me."<sup>2</sup> The Apostle is not teaching deification in the sense of loss of identity as the soul participates in Christ's life and Christ participates in his, but he is testifying to a union with God which is dynamically

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 2, xxxiv (author's underlining).

<sup>2</sup>Galatians 2:20, cf. Flame 2, xxxiv.

experienced more than being just a forensic or platonic relationship. It is an infused deification modeled after the likeness of the Son, but without destroying any of the uniqueness and distinctiveness which is man's by his creaturely nature.

Other details of John's doctrine of deification will be noted subsequently, but it now is important that the very references in his writings which teach this idea be examined and analyzed carefully to ascertain whether or not John does indeed lapse into a form of deificationism which is sub-Christian or even anti-Christian.

The passages in John's writings which explicitly refer to the divinization of the soul and to the absorption of it in the Godhead are many, and, in order to ascertain the ontological extent of divine union according to John, it is necessary to note and exegete the principal usages he makes of these terms. The references are found almost wholly in The Canticle and The Living Flame, since these two works deal more with the unitive experience itself, whereas The Ascent and Dark Night are restricted primarily to a discussion of the prior purgations and contemplation which are necessary for experiencing union with God.

In noting the culminative results of the divine cleansing and curing that God effects in the soul during contemplation it is worthwhile



to observe again the radical change which John says takes place:

This renovation is: an illumination of the human intellect with supernatural light so that it becomes divine, united with the divine; an informing of the will with love of God so that it is no longer less than divine and loves in no other way than divinely, united and made one with the divine will and love; and also a divine conversion and change of the memory, the affections, and the appetites according to God. And thus this soul will be a soul of heaven, heavenly and more divine than human.<sup>1</sup>

As an isolated statement which, on the surface, appears to teach deification of the soul, this passage is illustrative since the language John uses is clear and the terms unambiguous. The statement does not, however, make any reference to the substance of the soul as such, but, instead, the deifying elements are applied only to man's psychic and sensory faculties: the intellect, the will, the memory, the affections, and the appetites. This is at least psychologically significant, since it will be remembered that John of the Cross makes a distinction in his writings between the inner essence or substance of the soul and its outer faculties. God dwells substantially in all souls, but it is clearly apparent that sensory and psychic faculties of man are not controlled by this creation presence of God. However, once the divine process of infused contemplation is begun in the soul, the divine exercise of the faculties is also commenced.

---

<sup>1</sup>Night II, 13, xi.

Another of the most striking passages where John appears to teach deification is the single instance when he uses the word deiform to describe the soul's union with God in His triune nature. The extensive context which precedes and follows this reference is basic for an understanding of what John means by the soul becoming God.

In the transformation which the soul possesses in this life, the same spiration passes from God to the soul and from the soul to God with notable frequency and blissful love, although not in the open and manifest degree proper to the next life. Such I believe was St. Paul's meaning when he said: Since you are sons of God, God sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, calling to the Father. [Gal. 4:6] This is true of the Blessed in the next life and of the perfect in this life according to the ways described.

One should not think it impossible that the soul be capable of so sublime an activity as this breathing in God, through participation as God breathes in her. For, granted that God favors her by union with the Most Blessed Trinity, in which she becomes deiform [se hace deiforme] and God through participation, how could it be incredible that she also understand, know, and love--or better than this be done in her--in the Trinity, together with it, as does the Trinity itself! Yet God accomplishes this in the soul through communication and participation. This is transformation in the three Persons in power and wisdom and love, and thus the soul is like God through this transformation. He created her in His image and likeness that she might attain such resemblance.

No knowledge or power can describe how this happens, unless by explaining how the Son of God attained and merited such a high state for us, the power to be sons of God, as St. John says. [Jn. 1:12] Thus the Son asked of the Father in St. John's Gospel: Father, I desire that where I am those You have given Me may also be with Me, that they may see

the clarity You have given Me, [Jn. 17:24], that is, that they may perform in us by participation in the same work that I do by nature, that is, breathe the Holy Spirit. And He adds: I do not ask, Father, only for these present, but for those also who will believe in Me through their doctrine; that all of them may be one as You, Father, in Me and I in You, that thus they be one as We are one, I in them and You in Me; that they may be perfect in one; that the world may know that You have sent Me and loved them as You have loved Me. [Jn. 17:20-23] The Father loves them by communicating to them the same love He communicates to the Son, though not naturally as to the Son, but, as we said, through union and transformation of love. It should not be thought that the Son desires here to ask the Father that the saints be one with Him essentially and naturally as the Son is with the Father, but that they may be so through the union of love, just as the Father and the Son are one in essential unity of love.

Accordingly, souls possess the same goods by participation that the Son possesses by nature. As a result they are truly gods by participation, equals and companions of God. Wherefore St. Peter said: May grace and peace be accomplished and perfect in you in the knowledge of God and of Our Lord Jesus Christ, as all things of His divine power which pertain to life and piety are given us through the knowledge of Him who called us with His own glory and power, by Whom He has given us very great and precious promises that by these we may be made partakers of the divine nature. [2 Pt. 1:2-5] These are words of St. Peter in which he clearly indicates that the soul will participate in God Himself by performing in Him, in company with Him, the work of the Most Blessed Trinity, as we mentioned, because of the substantial union between the soul and God. Although this participation will be perfectly accomplished in the next life, still in this life when the soul has reached the state of perfection, as has the soul we are here discussing, she obtains a foretaste and noticeable trace of it in the way we are describing, although, as we said, it is indescribable.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 39, iv-vi.

The language in these paragraphs sounds almost irreverent, for to speak of human souls as being gods and to call them equals of God is to press linguistic propriety beyond its reasonable limits. But this is exactly what John wants to do. He wants to show that the ontological experience of God goes beyond the expectations and logic of reason, and it reveals to the "proficient" an optimum degree of theological and empirical reality that is nascent in the Scriptures.

The pivotal word in the passage just cited is the term "participation." Thus it is not through deification or absorption that the soul becomes "deiform and God," but it is through participation in the deity of Christ as this is breathed in the soul by the Holy Spirit. John's Spanish translation of St. Paul's statement in Galatians is ample proof of this,<sup>1</sup> for by it he teaches that God's creaturely children (sons of God) share in the Spirit of Christ and thus possess the degree of divinity to call God "Father," as the only begotten Son does naturally.

John further verifies this idea of deification through unitive participation by citing the high-priestly prayer of Christ in the Fourth Gospel, where the natural Son intercedes to His Father in behalf of the participatory sons, that they may have Christ in them and be loved of

---

<sup>1</sup>Galatians 4:6. See the Spanish to English translation on Canticle 39, iv.

the Father like the Son is loved of the Father.<sup>1</sup> In other words, through the union of love, the sons of God receive by transformation and infusement the "goods" and love of God which the eternally generated Son of God receives naturally. To repeat John's phrase from II Peter, the sons of God are made "partakers of the divine nature" by sharing in the "great and precious promises," and in this sense they are "deiforme and God."

This participation in the divinity (i. e., Being) of God is both present and future, realized and beatific as John indicates in the following Living Flame passages:

Having been made one with God, the soul is somehow God through participation. Although it is not God as perfectly as it will be in the next life, it is like the shadow of God. Being the shadow of God through this substantial transformation, it performs in this measure in God and through God what He through Himself does in it.

.....  
 A reciprocal love is thus actually formed between God and the soul, like the marriage union and surrender, in which the goods of both (the divine essence which each possesses freely by reason of the voluntary surrender between them) are possessed by both together. They say to each other what the Son of God spoke to the Father through St. John: Omnia mea tua sunt et tua mea sunt et clarification sum in eis (All my goods are yours and yours

---

<sup>1</sup>John 17:20-23. See the Spanish to English translation on Canticle 39, v.

are mine, and I am glorified in them). [Jn. 17:10] In the next life this will continue unintermittently in perfect fruition, but in this state of union it occurs, although not as perfectly as in the next, when God produces in the soul this act of the transformation.

The eschatological reciprocity is thus an eternal sharing or participation in each other without ever ceasing to become what man and God presently are in essence. God, in love, can give His deity to man without ceasing to be divine in Himself, and man, in reciprocal divine love, can give back this deity to God without losing his creaturehood. John is not teaching a deification of man whereby he gradually leaves or otherwise disposes of his humanity. Instead he is teaching the type of participatory deification which is involved in such Biblical phrases as "sons of God," "joint-heirs with Christ," "born of the Spirit," "Christ liveth in me," and others.

The same idea is contained in John's use of the expression: "the soul is absorbed in love and the divine life."<sup>2</sup> By the term "absorption" John is not teaching dissolution and loss of identity, but he is emphasizing the degree of self-giving which God exercises in divine union. He shares His Life and Love so freely and completely with man

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 3, lxxviii f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2, xxxv; 1, xxxv; Canticle 26, xiv, xvii, et al.

that the soul is totally immersed or absorbed in Him, but without losing any of its creaturely nature. John uses absorption in the sense of a cup of water that is absorbed by cotton or some other absorbent material. The water does not lose its natural components and become cotton, but it is surrounded and interpenetrated by the cotton and withdrawn from the cup. "The soul, then, is absorbed in divine life, withdrawn from its natural appetites and from all that is secular and temporal."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the terms absorption and immersion are used interchangeably by John, for he can say that ". . . the divine substance . . . absorbs the soul in itself with its divine flame. And in that immersion of the soul in wisdom the Holy Spirit sets in motion the glorious flickerings of His flame."<sup>2</sup> Never does the Mystical Doctor use the word absorber in the sense of dissolution, diffusion, or dispersal, but always the term is found in the context of God's abundant love and self-giving.

The Theological Basis for Ontological Union. The above analysis, though brief, has been sufficient to indicate that John of the Cross does indeed teach a doctrine of deification and absorption, but it is a divinization activity of God which both establishes man as a son of God

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 2, xxxv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1, xvii.

and yet maintains him as a creature of God. How are these two apparently antithetical ideas brought together by John without losing man's identity and humanity on the one hand or without leaving him solely in his creatureliness on the other? The answer is found in John's doctrine of ontological adoption which he calls "participation in God," and which in fact is the essence of the divine union experience itself.

The three principal theological bases for ontological adoption as taught by John are: (1) the unitive and ontological relations maintained within the Godhead; (2) the permanent nature of Christ's hypostatic union with humanity; and (3) the sovereign and gracious inclusion of man in the divine nature. A complete exposition of these concepts would be a study occupying several volumes, so, of necessity, only summary statements can be made in the present context in order to get at the heart of John's teaching on the nature of divine union with man.

In the first place it should be noted that the Mystical Doctor builds his whole theological superstructure on the substructure of the Holy Trinity. His Divine union idea would be only an exercise in human psychology were this not so, or, just another treatise on pantheistic absorptionism and essential deification. But John is careful to recognize the substantial union which always exists between the Father and the Son and which is eternally perfected in the procession of the



Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Thus the three Persons--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--naturally share in each other's essence by their common possession of the fullness of Deity and this intra-divine union of the three Persons of the Godhead forms the foundational step in John's ladder of divine-human union through man's participation in the Trinity.<sup>2</sup>

John also gives a significant place in his writings to the hypostatic union of Christ with human nature in the Incarnation. This union forms the theological and ontological bridge in his doctrine between the union of the three Persons in the Godhead and the union of These with man. Thus he can speak of the ultimate mystery of Christ "in hypostatic union of the human nature with the divine Word, and in the corresponding union of men with God. . . ."<sup>3</sup> And he can describe both these unions as an elevation of humanity into the Godhead without a loss of essence on the man's side. Another aspect of the hypostatic union of Christ which is indispensable for man's union with God is its permanence. Thus, not only did the Divine Word take on mankind's nature as a part

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Ascent II, 13, xi; 39, iii f.; 40, vii; Canticle 39, iii f.; 40, vii; Flame 2, i; 3, ii; 3, lxxxii.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle 39, vi; Flame, Prologue, ii; 1, vi and xv; 3, lxxx et al.

<sup>3</sup>Canticle 37, iii.

of His own nature, but even through death, resurrection, and ascension He has remained both human and divine inseparably and unconfusedly. It is in this sense that John speaks about man's glorious life in Christ as it is experienced by the "touches" during contemplation and divine union, for it is the permanently glorified humanity of Christ which is experienced in these encounters, and not some manifestation of Christ which is now lacking human nature.

The third basic unitive relationship which John expounds is rooted in the other two. It is the adoptive or participatory union which God effects in man in order to bring about his incorporation into the humanity and deity of Christ without any dissolution of man's personal identity.<sup>1</sup> The nature and effects of this adoptive union as John teaches it merit separate consideration.

The Nature of Ontological Adoption. The noun "adoption" is used here because it is a Biblical and theological term, and because it is one of the words that John of the Cross uses in relation to man's participation in God through Divine Union. The adjective "ontological" is used to distinguish the idea from its forensic background, and to denote the dynamic and vital aspects of adoption as it proceeds from

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Canticle 38, i; 37, iii f.; 14, x; 5, iii f.; 7, iii & vii, et al.

God's Being for the purpose of imparting divine sonship to man. In John's doctrines of sonship and adoption, the inner substance of his concept of divine union is to be found.

That man is made a son of God through being united to Christ in faith is one of the principal teachings of St. Paul, the Apostle John, and John of the Cross. But what does this mean ontologically and empirically, particularly in the writings of the Mystical Doctor? How is man made a son of God and in what sense does this make him divine, and how is his sonship related to the eternal filiation of Christ? Putting these questions to John of the Cross reveals a doctrine of adoption which is the heart of his divine union experience.

In the first place, it is John's explicit teaching that the sonship which man receives from God consists of an impartation of God Himself rather than merely an exalted title or filial position conferred on him. The soul "is conscious that God is indeed its own and that it possesses Him . . . as His adopted son, through the grace of His gift of Himself."<sup>1</sup> Sonship, then, is not an external, legal, or "logical" deduction, but it is a supernatural rebirth and new life in which God brings about an ontological change and process in man that makes him

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 3, lxxviii.

become progressively more like the eternally generated Son in essence. Thus divine union in John's theology is the actual possession of deity by the soul due to God's sheer grace in giving His very Being to man. It is an ontological union of God with man, and it is a sharing (participación) by man in the very Life of the glorified Christ, with the result that everything which the Son possesses naturally is also possessed by the adopted sons through union with Him.

But John does not teach that the sons of God through divine union are so essentially divinized that they become additional persons of the Godhead, even though there are references in John's works to the soul's deification and absorption in God. His emphasis is also upon the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Christ's Sonship and His relation to the Father and Holy Spirit, and to man. Christ alone is the Son by nature. He alone is the Son by essential union with the Godhead. But he also is the Son of Man through hypostatic union with mankind, and the union with God which is available to man is a "union of likeness," in that it is modeled after the similitude of the hypostatic union.<sup>1</sup>

Thus in referring to the perfect union of love between God and the soul, John says:

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 39, v f.; 37, iii; Ascent II, 5, iii.

This is the adoption of the sons of God, who will indeed declare to God what the very Son said to the Eternal Father through St. John: All my things are yours, and yours mine. [Jn. 17:10] He says this by essence, since He is the natural Son of God, and we say it by participation, since we are adopted sons. He declared this not only for Himself, the Head, but for His whole mystical body, the Church, which on the day of her triumph, when she sees God face to face, will participate in the very beauty of the Bridegroom.<sup>1</sup>

When John wants to distinguish between the substantial union of the soul with God through His Creative Activity and the adoptive union whereby man becomes a son of God through re-creation, he uses the expression "union of likeness." (union de semejanza). Also, the Scriptures he uses to explain this union and his exegesis of them denote the ontological nature which John sees in the divine union experience. He quotes John 1:17 and says:

This is what St. John meant when he said: Qui non ex sanguinibus, neque ex voluntate carnis, neque ex voluntate viri, sed ex Deo nati sunt [Jn. 1:13], which can be interpreted: He gives power for becoming the children of God (for being transformed in God) only to those who are born not of blood (not of natural complexion and humors), nor of the will of the flesh (the free will included in the natural aptitude and capacity), nor even less of the will of man (which includes every mode and manner by which the intellect judges and understands). To none of these has He conferred the power of becoming the children of God; only to those who are born of God (those who, in their rebirth through grace and death to everything of the old man, rise

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 36, v.

above themselves to the supernatural and receive from God this rebirth and sonship which transcends everything imaginable).

St. John affirms elsewhere: Nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et spiritu Sancto non potest videre regnum Dei (He who is not reborn in the Holy Spirit will be unable to see the kingdom of God, which is the state of perfection). [Jn. 3:5] To be reborn in the Holy Spirit during this life is to become most like God in purity, without any mixture of imperfection. Accordingly, pure transformation can be effected--although not essentially--through the participation of union.<sup>1</sup>

The meaning of this for divine union is that by sharing (participación) in the Son's natural and hypostatic sonship as Son of God and Son of Man, the soul can become a son of God by supernatural transformation. This is a real sharing in the Life of the Eternal Son, and it begins with an actual re-birth of man by the same Spirit which was effective in the hypostatic union of Christ with human flesh, and it continues as a spiritual growth whereby man receives greater communication of divine love. Thus Jesus, in the passage previously quoted, can pray for the disciples' oneness with each other and with Him in the work of God.

Father, I desire that where I am those You have given Me may also be with Me, that they may see the clarity You have given Me [Jn. 17:24], that is, that they may perform

---

<sup>1</sup> Ascent II, 5, v.

in us by participation the same work that I do by nature, that is, breathe the Holy Spirit. And He adds: I do not ask, Father, only for these present, but for those also who will believe in Me through their doctrine; that all of them may be one as You, Father, in Me and I in You, that thus they be one as We are one, I in them and You in Me; that they may be perfect in one; that the world may know that You have sent Me and loved them as You have loved Me. [Jn. 17:23-23] The Father loves them by communicating to them the same love He communicates to the Son, though not naturally as to the Son, but, as we said, through union and transformation of love. It should not be thought that the Son desires here to ask the Father that the saints be one with Him essentially and naturally as the Son is with the Father, but that they may be so through the union of love, just as the Father and the Son are one in essential unity of love.

Accordingly, souls possess the same goods by participation that the Son possesses by nature.<sup>1</sup>

The clear distinction is drawn by John between the "natural" communication of love to the Eternal Son and the necessity for a supernatural communication of this same divine love to the sons by adoption. What the only begotten Son possesses by nature of His Eternal Union with the Father, the many adopted sons receive by a sharing in the life of their Elder Brother through the Spirit. Since they are actually sons by ontological adoption, they can truly cry "Abba, Father," for "God sent the Spirit of His Son into their hearts" to make them sons.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticum 39, v f.

<sup>2</sup>Galatians 4:6. Cf. Canticum 39, iv.

"He created her [the soul] in His image and likeness that she might attain such a resemblance" as that which the Son has through Hypostatic Union and the three Persons of the Godhead have in their triune relations.<sup>1</sup> The new adoptive union with God is one of spiritual generation, and thus it is superior to the creation or substantial union which refers back to man's being "made" in the divine image, rather than being partaker of the divine nature.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the divine union between God and man which John teaches is of an entirely different order from that which exists because of man's creation relation with God. Divine union for him is the real communication of Christ's sonship which results in an actual sharing in the union of love within the Holy Trinity.

It is in this sense, then, that John of the Cross speaks of man as being deified. It is a union of the divine and human natures within man's creaturely existence which in no way de-humanizes man or takes away his individuality. It is a union in the similitude or likeness of Christ's hypostatic union with man, but man's union with God is only modeled after Christ's union. It is an adoptive union whereby man, through infused faith, is taken up into the divine nature and given

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>II Peter 1:2-5. Cf. Canticle 39, vi.



sonship through an actual participation in Christ's life. This elevation into the divine nature is possible only because of the adoptive union of man with Christ and the hypostatic union of the Son's human nature with His divine essence which He shares naturally with the Godhead. In this way, John speaks of man as becoming God--by being united with God by God and thereby becoming a son of God and actually sharing in what God is. But the Mystical Doctor is also careful to distinguish that though divine union gives man the divine nature, it does not make him who God is, for the bride is to be eternally the adoring bride, and the Bridegroom is eternally the natural Son. Never does John imply that there is any loss of identity between the Bride and Bridegroom. Thus, even though "the intellect of the soul is God's intellect; its will is God's will; its memory is the memory of God; and its delight is God's delight,"<sup>1</sup> the substance of this soul "is not the substance of God since it cannot undergo a substantial conversion into Him."<sup>2</sup>

The Effects of Ontological Union. John expounds the effects of the ontological aspects of divine union in such great detail that they cannot all be analyzed in this study, but two of them require special attention.

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 2, xxxiv.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

One of these has already been alluded to, but its significance demands brief consideration again. It is the effect of God's Being upon man's faculties and operations. Ontological union not only makes man a "new creature in Christ Jesus," but, according to John of the Cross, it revolutionizes his thinking (the intellect), his affections and joys (the will), and his concept of time (the memory). It gives him the divine nature, and the consequences of this are the dynamic changes which result in all the "movements, operations, and inclinations of the soul."<sup>1</sup>

But one of these changes requires particular note, for it is frequently not understood, or is neglected by John's interpreters. It is the effect of divine union upon man's memory. What the Mystical Doctor is teaching in this respect is not the gift of amnesia but the gift to transcend the restrictive elements of created time and to experience something of the divine timelessness. ". . . the memory, which by itself perceived only the figures and phantasms of creatures, is changed through this union so as to have in its mind the eternal years mentioned by David. [Ps. 76:6]"<sup>2</sup> In other words, the impartation of the divine nature to man in the degree which John of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

Cross experienced it, made possible a piercing of the mind through time into eternity, the mode of God's existence. Thus when John speaks of forgetfulness in regard to the unitive experience he does not mean that the soul's memory becomes blank, but that it transiently transcends (as do the intellect and will, also) its creaturely limitations and thereby is not conscious of time and the pressures of its irrevocable nature. With his memory thus transformed, John does not forget his name, the multiplication table, or the Carmelite rule, but he seemingly forgets them, for his memory is elevated by God's nature and transcends the mundane, the trivia, and the successive routine of man's present existence as it is imprisoned and compressed in time. But, upon sharing in the divine Essence, Man is privileged to share also in God's eternity and, as John describes it, the reality of this is felt in the soul's memory faculty. <sup>1</sup>

Man's intellect experiences blinding Light as the divine nature is imparted. His will delights in overwhelming Love. And his memory tastes Eternity. The effects, then, of ontological adoption are eschatological in nature, and though they are "realized" transiently in man's present existence, their fulfillment and perfection awaits the soul's departure from the body. <sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent III, 14, i ff.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle 39, vi.

The other effect of God's impartation of Himself through union with man is the corporate result of this ontological adoption. John's interpretation of the Christ's High-Priestly prayer is significant here:

This is the adoption of the sons of God, who will indeed declare to God what the very Son said to the Eternal Father through St. John: All my things are yours and yours mine. [Jn. 17:10] He says this by essence, since He is the natural Son of God, and we say it by participation, since we are adopted sons. He declared this not only for Himself, the Head, but for His whole mystical body, the Church.<sup>1</sup>

In this summary statement, John indicates the ontological basis for the church as the Body of Christ. All that is Christ's is possessed by the Church collectively, just as it is possessed individually by each soul. By this John means that the divine union experience is not an isolated encounter of a soul with God, but it is a corporate experience which results in deification of the Church as Christ's body. In fact, the marriage terminology in his writings can be interpreted corporately to mean that the bride is the Church with Christ as the Head.

Of course the same precautions regarding misinterpretations of John's concept of deification must be applied to his ecclesiology at this point, for he is never de-humanizing the Church. He only supernaturalizes it with the fact of the communication of God's nature to it.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 36, v.

It is thus the "Body of Christ" in the real and ontological sense, rather than being just a metaphor or symbol of this reality. In this manner the teaching of John regarding man's incorporation or adoption into Christ is analogous to the Church's participation and operations in the Son as his Bride and Body. Also, the unity within the Church for which Christ prays in John 17 is not based on organizational conformity nor even on operational union, but it is grounded in the unity the Father has with the Son and the corporate participation of the Church in the divine Love, Light, and Life which is available to all members from Him who is their Head.

Thus the effects of God's self-impartment to the soul are personal and corporate, ontological, and operational, presently foretasted and eschatologically perfected. They are this way because the adoptive union is a work of God.

### III. The Means of Divine Union

The means for effecting divine union are adequately clear in the theology of John of the Cross. He reiterates them in each of his major works in order that any of his readers not possessing the complete theological trilogy would nevertheless know the proximate and proportionate means for realizing the divine-human union.

Basically the modal formula for experiencing the transformation into God's love which John teaches includes the following elements: (1) active and passive purgation and illumination of the sensitive and spiritual faculties of the soul, (2) the habit of infused contemplation in the soul's passive receptivity, (3) the dynamic effects of faith, hope, and love, and (4) God's sovereign grace. In each of these God is the Agent and man is the receiver. The purgation processes are essentially taken for granted by John when he reaches the unitive stage in his theology. The various aspects of his doctrine of contemplation have previously been noted in this study, and will not be presented again in the present context. But the interrelation and particular functions of the so-called "theological virtues,"-- faith, hope, and love, have not been sufficiently analyzed thus far in their role as proximate means for effecting the transformation of the soul's union with God. Also, the immediate activity of God in the union experience requires further elucidation in order to place in proper perspective the self-communicating love of God and His sovereignty in grace.

#### The Inter-Relation of the Theological Virtues

To study any one of the modal virtues in John's theology in isolation from the others is to see only a portion of its significance

and function in the unitive process. The triple virtues of faith, hope, and love must be mutually overlaid to see them in their proper sanjuanist perspective, for to John they are essentially the three sides of the same operational and essential grace of God. Accordingly, then, though they deal primarily with distinctive faculties of the soul, they nonetheless are a unity in their divine-human relations. Their distinctiveness is apparent in the process toward union, but their unity is seen in their convergence at the union experience where they consummate it and maintain it appositively.

Operational Inter-Relation. There are a multitude of passages in John of the Cross to denote the operational unity and functional distinctions of the three virtues. Faith is related to the intellect, hope to the memory, and love to the will in the process of purging these faculties of everything inhibiting union with God. Simultaneously they effect the necessary purification and divine infilling which results in the union experience itself. Thus,

. . . in order to journey to God the intellect must be perfected in the darkness of faith, the memory in the emptiness of hope, and the will in the nakedness and absence of every affection.

As a result, the necessity of the soul's journey through this dark night with the support of these three virtues will be manifest. They darken and empty it of all things that its advancement along this spiritual

road may be more secure. As we said, the soul is not united with God in this life through understanding, nor through enjoyment, nor through imagination, nor through any other sense; but only faith, hope and charity (according to the intellect, memory, and will) can unite the soul with God in this life.

These virtues, as we said, void the faculties: Faith causes darkness and a void of understanding in the intellect, hope begets an emptiness of possessions in the memory, and charity produces the nakedness and emptiness of affection and joy in all that is not God. <sup>1</sup>

The relation between the operations of faith and love is particularly well illustrated by John in an analogy he makes of guides leading the blind:

Faith and love are like the blind man's guides. They will lead you along a path unknown to you, to the place where God is hidden. Faith, the secret we mentioned, is comparable to the feet by which one journeys to God, and love is like one's guide. <sup>2</sup>

By faith, then, one follows the way to union with God, and by love one experiences it. Faith helps man to see himself, but love helps him to forget self. In faith man "sees" God by hearing, whereas in love he becomes one with God by surrender. Faith and love operate side by side in John's doctrine, just as the intellect and will function correlatively in the soul. Without faith there can be no love,

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 6, i. ii.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 1, xi.



and, consequently, no divine union. Likewise without love, mountain-removing faith is of no avail. Faith, hope and love are all indispensable means for divine union.

Substantial Inter-Relations. But the interrelations of the theological virtues goes deeper than the operational unity they effect. They are each divinely given gifts, and their intensity increases in exact proportion to the purity of the soul and the sovereign grace of God. Thus "the more one desires darkness and annihilation of himself . . . the greater will be the infusion of faith and consequently of love and hope, since these three theological virtues increase together."<sup>1</sup>

John employs a metaphor from daily life to illustrate the substantial interrelations of the three unifying virtues.<sup>2</sup> He portrays the soul as a bride coming toward Christ, the Spouse, dressed in clothing which both signifies its affection for Christ and its defense against adversaries. Accordingly, the soul appears clothed in a white inner tunic, and green coat of mail, and a red toga. These colors correspond respectively to: purity of faith, life of hope, and the beauty of love. Faith, then, is the inner virtue that envelops and clothes the soul with divine knowledge, while love is the outer garment

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 24, viii.

<sup>2</sup>Night, II, 21, i-xii.

of divine affection which makes the soul attractive before the Logos Son. Between them is the livery of hope which is directed to God, since it is like a "visor" on the soul that allows vision only toward heavenly things. John's conclusion is that the substantial covering given the soul by all three of these virtues is indispensable if one desires to arrive at perfect union with God, for

Without walking sincerely in the garb of these three virtues it is impossible to reach perfect union with God through love. This garb and disguise worn by the soul was very necessary that it reach its goal, which was this loving and delightful union with its Beloved. It was a great grace that the soul put on this vesture and persevered in it until attaining its end or goal.<sup>1</sup>

Hope in John's theology is related more to the eschatological elements of union, while faith and love are shown to be integral means whereby divine union is effected and maintained. This is because the Mystical Doctor relates the faculty of memory to the epiphanal glory of Christ in the next life, whereas faith and love are correlatives respectively of the intellect and will. These latter faculties are the principal psychic elements transformed in the unitive experience with God. Thus John says that faith sketches (dibujar) its imperfect concept of Christ over the intellect, and, over faith's sketch is drawn on the

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 21, xii.

will the sketch of love. Hence "the truths infused in the soul through faith are as though sketched, and when they are clearly visible [in the next life] they will be like a perfect and finished painting in the soul." But "when there is union of love, the image of the Beloved is so sketched in the will and drawn so intimately and vividly, that it is true to say that the Beloved lives in the lover and the lover in the Beloved."<sup>1</sup>

Faith, then, begins what love consummates, and they both make possible the realization of hope's content, namely the ultimate vision of God. The beatific convergence of the three theological virtues awaits the eschaton, but their most complete focal point in this life is the union of God with man in the transformation and reciprocal participation of love.

#### The Distinctive Role of Faith as a Means of Divine Union

John of the Cross could well be given the title of "Doctor of Faith and Love," for these are the two principal modal themes in his theology, and he continually reminds his readers that "without faith it is impossible to please God," the summum bonum of man's existence.

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 12, vi and vii.

The distinctive function of faith with regard to the realization of complete divine-human union in this life is foundational for all the other phases and operations leading up to and including the union itself.

Faith and the Intellect. "Faith," says John of the Cross, "affirms what cannot be understood by the intellect."<sup>1</sup> With these words he sets his course and proceeds to define the function of faith as the means by which the soul receives the supernatural knowledge necessary to guide it toward divine union.<sup>2</sup> The "secret ladder" of descent and ascent into God is none other than the rungs of faith on which the soul must depend if oneness with God is ever attained.

Faith works primarily with the intellect because it is man's intellect that prevents him from truly knowing God in His Being when it is not "darkened" and "emptied." The two kinds of knowledge--discursive and mystical--make it necessary to have two distinctive modes for apprehending them, namely, reasoning and faith. The problem, however, is deeper. In the acquisition of knowledge, which can only be empirically received, there is no possibility for a mutual dependence on both faith and human reasoning. On the contrary, faith requires the

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 6, ii.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

complete annihilation of trust in the intellect in order to see the light of supernatural knowledge. This does not mean that all human reason is annihilated, but it does signify that if divine union is attained, it does not come by discursive knowledge, but by infused truth. Like a blind man, one must "lean on dark faith, accept it for his guide and light, and rest on nothing of what he understands, tastes, feels, or imagines."<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately, faith allows no vacuum to occur in the intellect, for as it is emptied of self-dependence, God infills it with "loving knowledge" in the form of "infused truth."<sup>2</sup> In other words, John of the Cross does not teach another distinctive faculty of the soul which receives the knowledge of faith. The "light" of faith is infused into the intellect itself in the proportion that it becomes emptied of all a priori concepts of God. Faith also elevates the intellect's capacity for being united with God in cognitive and affectional union.

Since God communicates this knowledge and understanding in the love with which He communicates Himself to the soul, it is very delightful to the intellect, since it is a knowledge belonging to the intellect, and it is delightful to the will since it is communicated in love, which pertains to the will.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 4, ii.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 12, v.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 27, v.

Faith, then, adds a new dimension to the intellect, for although its natural function is to understand, in the journey toward empirical union with God, its role is only to receive. While it is endeavoring to fulfill its natural function of reasoning, it is not approaching God but withdrawing from Him. But to know God in His Being, the intellect must

. . . withdraw from itself and from its knowledge so as to journey to God in faith, by believing and not understanding. In this way it reaches perfection, because it is joined to God by faith and not by any other means, and it reaches God more by not understanding than by understanding.<sup>1</sup>

This "withdrawal of the intellect from itself," which is so necessary in the theology of John of the Cross, is a process which involves the most rigorous intellectual discipline on man's part, and the most personal divine infusement on God's part. Man is required to withdraw completely from all use of and all dependence in his agent intellect as a means for knowing God. His former ideas, images, and concepts of God are to be abandoned, and the absolute passivity of the active intellect must be achieved in order to avoid the tendency to distort, qualify, or otherwise objectify God's self-revelation. These rational structures pertaining to the divine nature and man's discursive

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 3, ii.

reasoning powers are not of faith, and are, therefore, serious impediments in the process of man's union with God. The rational structures in human consciousness are not of faith, since they are developed within and from the world of observable objects and, though they might be used discursively to point to God's existence, they are impotent as modes for effecting the actual experience of God in His Being. The active reason, then, must not only be stilled, but transcended if man is to get beyond himself and his natural habits of knowing. Faith is the only means at man's disposal whereby he can be thus lifted up and brought into cognitive union with God.

Faith and the Unitive Experience. "I will espouse you to me in faith."<sup>1</sup> With these words of Hosea, John of the Cross unequivocally names faith as the means whereby the divine union is effected. It is faith that is clothed in hope and love, and it is faith that is divinely infused, but there "is no other means by which one reaches true union with God."<sup>2</sup>

The specific function of faith in the actual union experience has to do with the Spirit's communication of divine gifts, such as love, knowledge, and wisdom. Thus:

---

<sup>1</sup>Hosea 2:20.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle 12, ii.

The purer and more refined a soul is in faith, the more infused charity it possesses, and the more charity it has, the more the Holy Spirit illumines it and communicates His gifts. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The principal gift that is communicated in the union experience is God Himself, since He is at once the Source, the Object, and the Content of Faith. Thus God infuses into the soul the divine union kind of faith. He is the "substance and concept of faith," and, He is the hidden goal of faith.<sup>2</sup> But is it not God in the vague immanental or pantheistic sense, nor is it God in the transcendental "wholly other" sense. It is God in Christ, the Bridegroom, the Word, who is in all aspects of faith's content and function. John illustrates this by describing faith as a silver-coated dove<sup>3</sup> which is made of purest gold in its essence and thereby incorporates the ontological qualities of Christ. Accordingly he says that "faith gives us God but covered with the silver of faith . . . for [Christ] promised to give Himself to her [the soul] but hidden in faith."<sup>4</sup>

It is Christ, then, who is the source and content of the faith that results in the dynamic union with Himself. It is His faith and it

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 29, vi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 3, iii-iv, and Canticle, 1, x.

<sup>3</sup>Psalms 68:13 (Psalm 67:14, Vulg.).

<sup>4</sup>Canticle, 12, iv.



is His Person through the Holy Spirit who effects the union of the soul with Him. It is in this context that audition, as the mode of faith's reception, can be comprehended. The content of faith is God in Christ as the Word (Verbo), so it is logical that John of the Cross should place considerable emphasis on the fact that faith as the means of the unitive experience is received by obedient hearing. This does not mean that it is derived per se from the auditory senses, but it is the "assent of the soul to what enters through hearing" as God communicates the Word to it.<sup>1</sup> The Mystical Doctor verifies this truth by citing the Scriptures which pertain to the resurrection appearances. In these, Christ was not recognized by sight, but by the "faith He inflamed in hearts" when they heard His voice.<sup>2</sup> "The hearing of the soul," says John of the Cross, "is the vision of the intellect."<sup>3</sup>

Faith Only. Faith in the union with God experience cannot be realized with any admixture of human effort. The intellect must "abide in faith alone,"<sup>4</sup> because it is only in the "darkness of faith alone"<sup>5</sup> that divine love and its unitive effect can take place. John's

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 3, iii-iv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., III, 31, viii.

<sup>3</sup>Canticle, 14-15, xv.

<sup>4</sup>Ascent, II, 9, i.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 16, xv.

insistence that faith and faith alone is the only possible means whereby one can hope for union with God is quite understandable in the light of his constant emphasis on the fact that the experience of oneness with God is not "proportioned to any of the senses." Also, the marriage metaphor, which figures so prominently in his writings, aptly illustrates his doctrinal basis in this respect. In love, one does not analyze dialectically or depend on intermediaries for knowledge. Love desires personal and direct apprehension, and with God the mode of this immediate apprehension is faith, and faith by itself. Thus, the purer the faith, the purer the love experience that results. In John's theology, his whole purpose is to lead persons to an empirical first-hand knowledge of God, through the practical experience of oneness with Him in His love. The only "proximate and proportionate means" for this is faith, and "the more intense a man's faith, the closer is his union with God."<sup>1</sup>

#### The Distinctive Role of Hope as a Means of Divine Union

The second theological virtue--hope--figures less prominently than faith and love in St. John's writings, for apparently two

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 9, i.

reasons. In the first place, John views hope as a correlative of the divine glory, and therefore it has more of an eschatological function in his theology than the perfectionistic roles of faith and love. This is not to deny the place that John gives to hope in this present life but in any comparison of his emphasis on faith and love, it is clear that hope receives less than a third of the attention which John gives to either one of the other two virtues. The Mystical Doctor alludes to the future life many times in his theology, and he notes the doctrine of hope in these contexts, but his theological purpose does not lead him into eschatology, but rather to the realization of God's presence in one's life for the here and now.

The second possible explanation for the comparative paucity of references to hope is that John of the Cross relates this virtue on the human side to the memory faculty of the soul. Apparently he finds far greater problems with man's intellect, which is darkened by faith, and with his will, which is darkened by love, than he does with the memory, which is to be overshadowed by hope. Nevertheless, he teaches that this latter faculty of the soul must be brought into subjection too, before God can unite Himself with the willing subject. In this sense, then, hope is as indispensable as a means toward divine union as the other two theological virtues.

Hope and the Memory. As has been previously noted, John of the Cross divides the faculties of the soul into three: the intellect, the memory, and the will. The memory also requires spiritual purification if God is to inhabit the soul in all its totality. The divinely infused virtue bestowed to effect the emptiness in the memory is hope.

Memory can be filled with earthly and heavenly objects that are formed from the five senses and with other conceptual forms that originate from sensible knowledge. Thus, "the annihilation of the memory in regard to all forms is an absolute requirement for union with God. This union cannot be wrought without a complete separation of the memory from all forms that are not God."<sup>1</sup>

As is the case with the intellect and the will, it is not the memory per se that is annihilated, nor is it that the memory must be emptied of all its content leaving the aspirant for union with God in a state of amnesia. The principle with memory is the same as that with the other faculties: God cannot be contained in any form, conceptualized or imagined, and thus all distinct knowledge about God must be negated as a possible via toward knowledge in God. So

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, III, 2, iv.

complete is the effect of hope as it functions to purify the memory that apparent forgetfulness results at times, but even this, ultimately, redounds for the supreme good.<sup>1</sup>

The function of hope in preparing the memory for occupancy by God is to empty and sweep the phantasy of all forms and knowledge from it and to elevate it toward the supernatural.<sup>2</sup> Every possession, whether in the hand or in the mind, is against hope, and thus to deprive one of conceptual possessions in the memory, hope works in a purgative manner to release the soul from the hold of these possessions.<sup>3</sup> It also works positively to inspire total expectation only in God. In this context John affirms that:

In the measure that the memory becomes dispossessed of things, in that measure it will have hope, and the more hope it has the greater will be its union with God; for in relation to God, the more a soul hopes the more it attains. And when, precisely, it is more dispossessed of things, it hopes more; and when it has reached perfect dispossession, it will remain with the perfect possession of God in divine union. But there are many who do not want to go without the sweetness and delight of this knowledge in the memory, and therefore they do not reach supreme possession and complete sweetness. For whoever does not renounce all his possessions cannot be Christ's disciple.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 2, iv.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., III, 7, ii.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

Hope and the Unitive Experience. Hope, like faith and love is infused by God,<sup>1</sup> and therefore its effects reach deep into the unitive experience. Faith is correlative to wisdom in God's nature, and love is correlative to His affection and essence. Accordingly, hope in John's theology, though related primarily to the glory of God is also associated with the eternal life aspects of Christian experience. Its symbolic color is green, and John explains that

This greenness of living hope in God imparts such courage and valor and so elevates the soul to the things of eternal life that in comparison with these heavenly hopes all earthly things seem, as they truly are, dry, withered, dead, and worthless. A person is thus divested of all worldly garments and does not set his heart on anything of what there is, or will be, in the world; he lives clothed only in the hope of eternal life.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of eternal life is more eschatological than soteriological in John of the Cross, but in his teachings on the unitive relationship it is apparent that the divine life which penetrates the soul is of the same qualitative nature as that of the eschaton. The Mystical Doctor has a predilection for reserving the durational aspect of eternal life for the eternal age, though the essence of the life is

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 24, viii.

<sup>2</sup>Night, II, 21, vi. Cf. also Ascent III, 27, iv.

identical with that which is experienced in the divine union.<sup>1</sup> In the Spiritual Canticle he states that:

In the transformation which the soul possesses in this life, the same spiration passes from God to the soul and from the soul to God with notable frequency and blissful love, although not in the open and manifest degree proper to the next life. Such I believe was St. Paul's meaning when he said: "Since you are sons of God, God sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, calling to the Father." (Gal. 4:6). This is true of the Blessed in the next life and of the perfect in this life according to the ways described.<sup>2</sup>

Hope, then, is a vital part of the unitive experience in that it empties the memory of sensory forms and replaces them with a sure expectation in God, and is thereby a firm hope for life of the eternal age kind which can presently be realized by union with God. But the function of hope is yet more dynamic and Christological in John's theology as the Spiritual Canticle indicates.

The Canticle portrays two persons deeply in love, and ultimately united in spiritual marriage. In one of the scenes the bride, who is the soul, begins searching for her Love, who is Christ. He is found not in nature, nor in the heavens, but within the soul itself. Thus the prose of happiness is sung to the soul:

---

<sup>1</sup>Compare Canticle, 26, iv; 36, ii; 37, i; 38, 1; 39, iv; et al.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 39, iv.

Oh, then, soul, most beautiful among all the creatures, so anxious to know the dwelling place of your Beloved that you may go in quest of Him and be united with Him, now we are telling you that you yourself are His dwelling and His secret chamber and hiding place. This is something of immense gladness for you, to see that all your good and hope is so close to you as to be within you, or better, that you cannot be without Him.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of this passage in the study of hope is that hope is identified here with the Beloved, who is Christ. Accordingly, then, the eternal life of divine union is none other than the life of the Son who gives Himself to live in the soul to sustain its spiritual vitality. Hope is not only a virtue that purges and purifies the memory, but it is Christ Himself in His dynamic presence giving eternal life to the whole of the soul.

The Distinctive Role of Love as a Means  
of Divine Union

The uses of prepositional distinctions is extremely limited when describing the nature and function of words, but, though there is much overlapping in the following differences between the theological virtues, it can be said that union with God is realized by faith in hope through love. Accordingly, then, faith is the proportional

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1, vii.



means by which the oneness is possible. Hope is the spherical means in which it takes place. Love, as God's essence, is the ontological means through which the transformation actually is realized. Of the three virtues, John of the Cross is more explicit and more extensive in his presentation of the distinctive role of love as a means of divine union.

Love and the Will. To understand John's doctrine regarding the relation of love to the purgation of the will, a brief analysis is necessary of his anatomy of the will. The Mystical Doctor teaches that the will is free and thus capable of free acts without the imposition of external forces. However, within the will are the affections, appetites, emotions, and desires as faculties or functions of it.<sup>1</sup> Since they were corrupted in man's Fall, these affections and appetites influence the freedom of the will toward enslavement to sin, but when they are divinely purged, they become so impassioned with God's love that the will is controlled by the divine will.

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Ascent, III, 16. The four emotions of the will are: joy, hope, sorrow, and fear. The inclusion of two Christian virtues (joy and hope) in this list is confusing to moderns, but John, of course, is not referring here to the theological virtue of hope, nor to the joy which is the fruit of the Spirit. Rather, his meaning is the inordinate joy and hope which finds satisfaction and gratification in temporal, sensual, and even spiritual objects that are not of God.

As faith, then, causes darkness to the intellect, and hope begets an emptiness toward possessions in the memory, so also love works in the will to "produce nakedness of affection and joy in all that is not of God."<sup>1</sup> To arrive at union with God it is indispensable that one "withdraw his affection from everything, in order to center it wholly upon God."<sup>2</sup> This withdrawal of affection from everything except God is systematically and extensively treated in John's theology, because the will is such a basic element in man's movement toward, or away from, union with God. Love moves in the will to purge it of all attachments to things, persons, and concepts that might in any way compete for one's total affection being directed toward God. The presupposed principle by which John judges all joys, emotions, and desires is forthrightly expressed:

The will should rejoice only in what is for the honor and glory of God, and the greatest honor we can give Him is to serve Him according to evangelical perfection; anything unincorporated in such service is without value to man.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, II, 6, ii. In Spanish, the same duality exists between the words charity (caridad) and love (amor) that exists in English. A study of John's use of these two words denotes that, for the most part, they are employed inter-changeably when the context is primarily theological. The word caridad is also frequently associated with deeds of mercy when found in the context of religious works and attitudes.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, II, 6, iv.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., III, 17, ii.

With this "staff" in hand, the Mystical Doctor proceeds to pare out of the soul all inordinate joy derived from the six kinds of "objects or goods": temporal, natural, sensory, moral, supernatural, and spiritual. The need for purging the first three of these is readily apparent, but the joy which proceeds from moral, supernatural, and spiritual goods requires some clarifications.

Moral goods can be summarized as the exercise of Christian works of mercy, the observance of divine law, and good manners in general. Supernatural goods are the "gifts and graces of God that exceed our natural faculties and powers" such as the gift of wisdom, tongues, discernment of spirits, and so forth.<sup>1</sup> Spiritual goods are "all those [objects] that are an aid and motivating force in turning the soul to divine things."<sup>2</sup> Some of the spiritual goods are delightful (religious statues, oratories, etc.) and some are painful (afflictions, trials, etc.) but both classes are a danger in regard to divine union if they are not held in proper subjection.

John of the Cross is not iconoclastic in his dealing with these religious gifts and practices, but he displays a profound understanding of human psychology in noting the harms and dangers related to joy

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 30, i; gratiae gratis datae.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., III, 33, ii.

which is derived from each of them. He sees the problems relating to pride, to misguided attachments and affections, and to pseudo-spirituality that arise from even the most religious of one's concepts and practices. Through it all, he pleads for a singleness of affection toward God in His Being rather than toward God and the "things" related to Him, no matter how supernatural or spiritual their function may be. While there is the least sense of pride, or an iota of joy, or the smallest grain of affection for these "gifts" from God, they serve in themselves to rob the will of love and affection that only belongs to God. As the apostle of oneness-with-God, John of the Cross thoroughly discusses these competitive "joys" and warns that unless they are annihilated, the complete union with God cannot be effected. Fortunately, the soul is not left alone to do this difficult purgation of the will by its own active efforts. The love of God is graciously infused into the will as the soul "strives not to fail" in fully loving God for thus one can . . . "induce God, if we may so express it, to further love him and find delight in his soul."<sup>1</sup> The nature of this divinely infused love requires further attention before passing to its function in the unitive experience.

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 13, xii.

The Nature of Infused Love. The measure of validity in the union experience with God as taught in the theology of John of the Cross is found in his doctrine of unitive love. Writing centuries before Nygren, Kittel, and scores of other scholarly works on the meaning of agape, John was able in the midst of the sixteenth century to describe love on a far different level than was witnessed in daily life. That John was united with the very Being of God in some type of empirical relationship, there can be no doubt, for his insights regarding the true nature of love proceed from a source higher than discursive reasoning or second-hand testimony.

But a note of caution needs to accompany any study of the doctrine of divine love in St. John's theology. To isolate this doctrine from the context of the other two unitive virtues and from the theological and empirical base that they provide for John's idea of amor is to do violence to the very essence of his teaching, and to separate the potential of love from its possibility in the oneness relation with God. This, of course, would be the exact opposite of John's purpose.

Far from beginning with man's will and affections, John's point of departure is in the intellect and the darkening effects of faith upon it. In other words, the empirical order of the theological virtues is as significant for divine union as their content and effects. Faith

in God only and faith alone is the indispensable foundation for the realization of hope and agape love. It would be utter futility to attempt an annihilation of the affections without first a faith directed toward destruction of confidence in the agent intellect and discursive reasoning as proportionate means for knowing God. To attempt an emulation of John's experience in divine love without first being rooted in divine faith is to lapse into sheer religious sentimentalism or into the pseudo-spiritual experiences against which John warns his readers so consistently. The will can have knowledge apart from the intellect, but the soul can never know divine love apart from infused faith and hope.<sup>1</sup> Love is the greatest of the three divinely imparted virtues, according to St. Paul, but its greatness is not in its independence or isolation from faith and hope, but, contrarily, its essential relevance is experienced only through and because of the others.

Love, then, in the theology of John of the Cross, is grounded in the darkness of submissive faith and experienced in the sphere of unpossessing hope. In this foundational context, John testifies that he met God as Love, he learned God as Love, and he surrendered his whole being to God as Love. The degree of his surrender denotes the

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Spiritual Canticle, 26, viii.

depths of his empirical knowledge of the nature, content, and unitive effects of such Love.

In laboring to describe his intimate experience of Love and in Love, John is beset with the problem of a variety of kinds and degrees of affection to which the term love applies. For example, he can speak of "base love," "natural love," "feeble love," "authentic love," impatient love, "sickness love," esteeming love, "unitive love," "sublime love," "perfect love," "inflaming love," and other descriptive modes or degrees of love.<sup>1</sup> A complete survey of his entire doctrine of love is not possible in the present study, but his teachings regarding the nature of infused love as it relates to the divine union experience must be noted. However, by the very nature of the subject, thorough analysis would be impossible for, ultimately, human language breaks off and reverts to adorational and poetic expression to describe the experience of divine Love. And, even then, such language falters into complete inadequacy, according to John of the Cross, and absolute reliance must be placed on the "Spirit of the Lord, who abides in us and aids our weakness, as St. Paul says, and

---

<sup>1</sup>Respectively: Canticle, 32, ii; Ascent, II, 29, xi; Night, II, 4, i; Canticle, 6, iv; ibid., 7, iv; ibid., 11, xiii; Night, II, 13, v; Canticle, 16, xi; ibid., 1, xxi; ibid., 38, v; Flame, 1, xvi.

pleads for us with unspeakable groanings in order to manifest what we can neither fully understand nor comprehend."<sup>1</sup> The Carmelite Saint appears to have lived with the frustration of attempting to express the ineffable in logical terms for the understanding of others. He acknowledges this problem in the prologue of his first literary production, the Spiritual Canticle:

Who can describe the understanding He gives to loving souls in whom He dwells? And who can express the experience He imparts to them? Who, finally, can explain the desires He gives them? Certainly, no one can! Not even they who receive these communications. As a result these persons let something of their experiences overflow in figures and similes, and from the abundance of their spirit pour out secrets and mysteries rather than rational explanations.

If these similtudes are not read with the simplicity of the spirit of knowledge and love they contain, they will seem to be absurdities rather than reasonable utterances.  
 . . .<sup>2</sup>

The definition which John gives to love in the active night of "spiritual" purgation<sup>3</sup> is: "to labor to divest and deprive oneself for God of all that is not God."<sup>4</sup> This general guideline for indicating the

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, Prologue, i. (Romans 8:2-6)

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>"Spiritual" in the sense of the non-sensory aspects of the soul, i. e., the intellect, memory, and will.

<sup>4</sup>Ascent, II, 5, vii.



nature and purpose of love is subsequently expanded in his writings to include the passive characteristics as well as the extrinsic expressions of love in the unitive experience.

The passive traits of love are outlined in detail by John of the Cross in his works and are briefly summarized below for this present study. The relevance of these intrinsic elements of love is that their reciprocal activity results in and becomes the divine-human union.<sup>1</sup> By nature, then, authentic Christian love is:

(1) Selfless and Self-Effacing, for one's love is "not for himself, but for what he loves,"<sup>2</sup> and it is the property of this love "to be unwilling to take anything for self, nor does it attribute anything to self, but all to the Beloved."<sup>3</sup>

(2) Disposed to Solitary Communion With the Beloved, since another "property of lovers [is] that they like to enjoy one another's companionship alone, apart from every creature and all company. . . . The reason they desire to commune with each other alone is that love is a union between two alone."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>For John's exposition of the traits of love, see Night, II, 13, and Canticle, 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 9, v.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 32, ii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 36, i.

(3) Desire for Mutual Equality and Likeness, "for the property of love is to make the lover equal to the object loved" . . . "love causes equality and likeness," . . . "it is the nature of love to seek to be . . . equaled to the loved object."<sup>1</sup>

(4) Weariness in Activities Unrelated to the Beloved, for "a characteristic of the desires of love is that all deeds and words unconformed with what the will loves, weary, tire, annoy, and displease the soul."<sup>2</sup>

(5) Fortitude and Courage, because it is the "property of perfect love to cast out all fear." (I John 4:18)<sup>3</sup>

(6) To Give and Not Receive in Return, "since it is "the property [of love] to give and not to receive, whereas the property of the intellect lies in receiving and not giving. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

(7) Maintain Interest in Everything Pertaining to the Beloved, for "this is love's trait: to examine all the goods of the Beloved."<sup>5</sup>

The following active characteristics of unitive love have been derived from John's writings and appear to be the exteriorization of

<sup>1</sup>Respectively: ibid., 28, i; Ascent, I, 4, iv; Night, II, 13, ix.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 10, v.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 24, viii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 38, v.

<sup>5</sup>Flame, 2, iv.

the above intrinsic ones. A similar listing of them will serve as an aid to understanding the radical terminology which John uses to describe the extent of the divine union relationship. Accordingly, love:

(1) Endures all nature of afflictions for the beloved. "True love receives all things that come from the Beloved--property, adversity, even chastisement--with the same evenness of soul."<sup>1</sup>

(2) Possesses Completely the Object Loved, since

The heart cannot have peace and rest while not possessing, and when it is truly in love it no longer has possession of self or of any other thing. And if it does not possess completely what it loves, it cannot help being weary, in proportion to its loss, until it possesses the loved object and is satisfied. Until this possession, the soul is like an empty vessel waiting to be filled, or like a hungry man craving for food, or like a sick person moaning for health, or like one suspended in the air with nothing to lean on.<sup>2</sup>

(3) Surrenders Itself to the Object of its Love. "Aware that she [the soul] has been set among so many delights, she makes a complete surrender of herself."<sup>3</sup>

(4) Unites and Joins the Lover With the Object, because "it is the nature of love to seek to be united [and] joined to the loved object in order to be perfected in the good of love."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 11, x.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 9, vi.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 27, ii.

<sup>4</sup>Night, II, 13, ix.

(5) Mutually Assimilates the Lovers Operationally, for it is "characteristic of love to assimilate lovers to one another in their spiritual faculties."<sup>1</sup>

(6) Exercises Reciprocity of Possessions Between the Lovers, as in the case of "the reciprocal love . . . of the marriage union and surrender, in which the goods of both are possessed by both together."<sup>2</sup>

(7) Transforms and Perfects its Object, "for love to be perfect it must have these two properties: It must consummate and transform the soul . . ." . . . "to consummate means to bring to completion of perfection."<sup>3</sup>

In summary, then, John's concept of love is his doctrine of God. He has no higher knowledge of God than that which he received in the supernatural infusion of the Essence of Love. The substance of love in his theology is accordingly closely related to God in His triune nature and in all of His self communicating relations with man.

Love as Essentially Purging and Illuminating "Fire." The purgation in the will of all affections, appetites, emotions, and desires not immediately centered in God leaves this faculty of the soul

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, III, 13, v.

<sup>2</sup>Flame, 3, lxxix.

<sup>3</sup>Canticle, 39, xiv.

prepared for the infilling of divine affection (or Love). Since God's loving affection is His very Being, and is inseparable from His divine essence, the infilling of the soul's will and affections with the love of God is the realization of the unitive experience itself. The process by which this takes place is illustrated by John of the Cross in an analogy of wood and fire. It is referred to frequently in his writings and is best reproduced verbatim:

The soul is purged and prepared for union with the divine light just as the wood is prepared for transformation into the fire. Fire, when applied to wood, first dehumidifies it, dispelling all moisture and making it give off any water it contains. Then it gradually turns the wood black, makes it dark and ugly, and even causes it to emit a bad odor. By drying out the wood, the fire brings to light and expels all those ugly and dark accidents which are contrary to fire. Finally, by heating and enkindling it from without, the fire transforms the wood into itself and makes it as beautiful as it is itself. Once transformed the wood no longer has any activity or passivity of its own, except for its weight and its quantity which is denser than the fire. For it possesses the properties and performs the actions of fire: it is dry and it dries; it is hot and it gives off heat; it is brilliant and it illumines; and it is also light, much lighter than before. It is the fire that produces all these properties in the wood.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of this analogy for the present context is that John uses fire throughout his theology as a dual symbol of the Holy Spirit and of Love. The poem and commentary Living Flame of Love

---

<sup>1</sup>Night, II, 10, 1.

is based on the analogous relation that John sees between fire and love. Fire purges and illumines. These two functions of fire describe perfectly for the Carmelite saint the dual movement of infused love.

Thus:

The very loving light and wisdom into which the soul will be transformed is that which in the beginning purges and prepares it, just as the fire which transforms the wood by incorporating it into itself is that which was first preparing it for this transformation.<sup>1</sup>

The crucial transformation in St. John's theology that changes the soul from emptiness into the "fire of divine love" occurs by an "enkindling of love" in the superior part of the soul (more particularly in the will) and through it, the whole soul begins to feel vividly that it is being "wounded by a strong divine love" and is aware of a certain "feeling and foretaste of God."<sup>2</sup> There is no understanding of this experience at the time since the reasoning powers have been stilled to receive the presence of God. The following paragraph summarizes well the transition in John's system from purgative contemplation to union with God through love. The word love has been underlined to emphasize the centrality of this third theological virtue in the experience.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 10, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 11, i.

The spirit herein experiences an impassioned and intense love, because this spiritual inflaming engenders the passion of love. Since this love is infused, it is more passive than active and thus generates in the soul a strong passion of love. This love is now beginning to possess something of union with God and thereby shares to a certain extent in its properties. These properties are actions of God more than of the soul and they reside in it passively, although the soul does give its consent. But only the love of God which is being united to the soul imparts the heat, strength, temper, and passion of love, or fire, as the soul terms it here. This love finds that the soul is equipped to receive the wound and union in the measure that all its appetites are brought into subjection, alienated, incapacitated, and unable to be satisfied by any heavenly or earthly thing.<sup>1</sup>

It would be erroneous to conceive of the unitive experience in love as a single act or even a series of acts by themselves. As John describes the matter it is a progressive process in which are included special acts of infused loving-knowledge that he calls "touches of divinity." These "delightful flashes" of sovereign grace have been discussed previously as a part of contemplation, but their function in the unitive process is illustrated by sparks and flames of the fire analogy. In practice, however, the soul does not continually "feel" the touches, nor is it always aware of the "inflaming and urgent longing of love," but as the "heat" becomes more intense due to the effects of contemplation, the soul ardently experiences "the burning warmth of love."

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 11, ii. Author's underlining for the word "love."

At one stage in the process of love's burning in the soul there occurs a significant outbreak of its extent. Besides inflaming the will and affections, the fire of love spreads to the intellect which at last is sufficiently purged and passive to receive it. Thus the will is impassioned with divine love and the intellect is illumined with divine knowledge and, to a degree, a volitional and cognitive union with God is experienced.

An important distinction should be noted at this point with regard to the freedom of man's will and the passive nature of the divinely infused love. It will be subsequently pointed out that the soul loves God with the same love (the divinely infused love) that it receives from Him and the question of the value of this reciprocal love might be raised, since it seemingly does not proceed from man's free choice. John anticipates this problem and replies to it with his doctrine of "passion love."<sup>1</sup> This concept involves the dichotic nature of the will which has been noted previously. The will is free and is therefore capable of loving or not loving, but within it, the affections, appetites, emotions, and desires of man also reside. Thus, infusion of divine love is not effected directly upon the will, because it is free, but it is

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. ibid., II, 13, iii.



imparted to the affections alone. The result is that a "passion of love" is enkindled in the affections which causes the will to become captive to this great influx of love and thus it loses its freedom in the matter of the affections, appetites, emotions, and desires.

The theological significance of this function of unitive love in the will is the stress it places on divine sovereignty and grace, for the divine love which God reciprocally receives from man is not left to human initiative but is ultimately the decision and function of the divine will itself. No taint of pelagianism finds its way into John's theology even though he recognizes the freedom of man's will in all matters except those relative to God's love and grace.

The "burning" of divine love continues to purge the soul and to infuse it with greater "esteeming love" along with an intense hunger and thirst for "perfection of love."<sup>1</sup> These are not clear demarcations in the soul's journey into union, but they do represent certain degrees of progress in its oneness relationship with God. John of the Cross later provides his readers with a very general classification of the ascending degrees of love. He uses the figure of a ladder, and discusses each of the ten steps "by which the soul ascends to God." They are given in resume form as follows:<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 13, v.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Night, II, 19-20. In the active night of purgation the

1. Disgust for the old life of sin.
2. Perseverance in searching for God.
3. Zealous in the performance of deeds of love.
4. Spiritual suffering for God.
5. Ardent longing for God.
6. Increased love through "divine touches."
7. Daring boldness in Prayer.
8. Life in union with Christ.<sup>1</sup>
9. Perfection in the experience of union.
10. Beatific assimilation of the soul in God.

The last of these stages of love is beyond realization in this life, and so awaits fulfillment in the life to come. None of them is a different kind of love in John's theology, but each represents a stage of advancement in the quality and intensity of love. Furthermore,

---

"secret ladder" of ascent is represented as faith (Ascent, II, 1, i), whereas in the passive night, John calls it the "mystical ladder of divine love." (Night, II, 19, i.) This apparent duplication is but another indication of how John sees the theological virtues as a unity in grace, but with distinctive functions.

<sup>1</sup>Regarding this stage, John, with a note of realism, says: "Although the soul satisfies its desire on this step of union, it does not do so continually. Some manage to get to it, but soon turn back and leave it. If one were to remain on this step, a certain glory would be possessed in this life; and so the soul rests on it for only short periods of time." Night, II, 20, iii.

except for the last three stages, it would be difficult to classify the soul's progress at any particular level, though the "divine touches" usually result in a special awareness of God's love in the soul. There is, however, a rapid progression in the quality and intensity of the love once the unitive and perfective stages are reached. The unitive level falls into two ascending degrees: the espousal and the marriage. Beyond these, there is still further maturative advancement in the perfective stage of divine union love. The two levels of unitive love in the espousal and marriage periods require noting at this present time.

Unitive Love: Communion Degree. As would be expected, the intensity and quality of love in the espousal stage of advancement toward oneness with God is more of a communion than full union. John portrays this concept under the figure of a supper which "refreshes and deepens love," and which affords a time of dialogical unity and communication between Christ and the soul.<sup>1</sup> It is also a period of further purification "from all the imperfections, rebellions, and imperfect habits of the lower part" of the soul in preparation for spiritual marriage, the highest state of spiritual attainment possible in this life.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 15, xxviii ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 22, iii.

The matter of "divine communications" during this "union of espousal" relates to John's doctrine of love and to his epistemological concept of intuitive knowledge. These deserve more than passing attention. He states that during this "communion and exchange of love," the "most that God communicates to the soul at any time" is experienced during it.

Yet it must not be thought that He communicates to all those who reach this state everything declared in these two stanzas, or that He does so in the same manner and measure of knowledge and feeling. To some souls He gives more and to others less, to some in one way and to others in another, although all alike may be in this same state of spiritual espousal. But the greatest possible communication is recorded here because it includes everything else.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of this divine communication is loving knowledge of the attributes of God and of the harmony existing between Him and creation presented to the soul in a "feeling of delight" which confirms it in love. Thus the intellect receives wisdom and the will experiences a profound intensity of divine affection.<sup>2</sup> The communication of this knowledge is effected in the framework of faith,<sup>3</sup> and the mode for its reception is audition, for it is "experienced in its hearing, which is the intellect."<sup>4</sup> Thus, he says: [the divine knowledge]

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 14-15, ii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 14-15, xv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 14-15, xiii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 14-15, xiii.

. . . which enters by hearing . . . ordinarily amounts to a manifestation of these naked truths to the intellect, or a revelation of the secrets of God. . . . Thus what is called the communication of God through hearing is very certain and loft.

Accordingly, St. Paul in order to declare the height of his revelation did not say . . . he heard secret words which men are not permitted to utter (2 Cor. 12:4) . . .

Since faith, as St. Paul also says (Rom. 10:17), comes through hearing, so too that which faith tells us, the understood substance, comes through spiritual hearing. The prophet Job indicates this clearly in speaking with God Who revealed Himself: . . . With the hearing of the ear I heard You and now my eye sees You. (Jb. 42:5) This passage points out clearly that to hear Him with the hearing of the soul is to see Him with the eye of the passive intellect.<sup>1</sup>

The theological significance of these ideas in John's theology is seen in the nature of the union that is realized between epistemology and ontology. Thus the hearing mode of the soul is the "passive intellect" by which intuitive knowledge is received and the content of this communication is not only "the understood substance" of God which is love, but it is also knowledge of His "divinity" and "secrets." In the "loving communion" (dialogical relation) between the soul and God, the nature of the intuitively acquired knowledge which proceeds from God is not secondary wisdom about God, but it is, instead,

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 14-15, xv.

ontological in nature, for it is the very "substance" of the One who is Love. In other words, in John's theology, there is no distinction between attributal knowledge of God and ontological knowledge of God. The divine attributes are the divine love, divinity, and glory, and consequently God has no greater communication to share than Himself in these modes. Accordingly, then, the soul cries to God, "Let your divinity shine on my intellect by giving it divine knowledge, and on my will by imparting to it the divine love, and on my memory with the divine possession of glory."<sup>1</sup>

Unitive Love: Total Transformation Degree. The difference in degree between spiritual espousal love and that of spiritual marriage (union) can be expressed only in the distinction between the terms "partial" and "total." In Biblical language it might be expressed as the difference between possession of the Spirit and fullness of the Spirit, or, in the modern mode: the distinction between "togetherness" and "oneness." For John of the Cross, it is the difference between courtship visits and a daily life of no separations.<sup>2</sup>

The degree of love in the consummation of the union is the result of a "total transformation in the Beloved" rather than the

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 19, iv.

<sup>2</sup>Flame, 3, xxiv.

previous dialogical relation of communion fellowship. In the transforming experience, both God and the soul surrender "the entire possession of self to the other," with the result being that the "union of love" is effected.<sup>1</sup> As this love is reciprocally experienced in God and the soul, the operational distinctions between the two dissolve into each other to such an extent that the soul appears to be like God Himself.<sup>2</sup> Thus the function of divine love is fulfilled, for, though the divine and human natures remain distinct, there is a complete union of spirit, love, and purpose. The human intellect is elevated to divine understanding, the will is controlled by divine love, and the memory is filled with divine knowledge. In this high state of union, God alone guides the soul and works in it without the use of means. This is one of the fundamental elements in John's concept of full divine union:

God works in and communicates Himself to her [the soul] through Himself alone, without the intermediary of angels

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 22, iii. Conformity of the will appears to be the decisive factor in the transformation, apart from divine sovereignty. Thus in the Ascent John can say: "A person who has reached complete conformity and likeness of will has attained total supernatural union and transformation in God." (Ascent, II, 5, iv). Such significance is probably given to the will due to its place in the causal order of the theological virtues and also because the will is the faculty most closely identified with the entry of the transforming love of God into the soul.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 22, iii and iv.

or natural ability, for the exterior and interior senses, and all creatures, and even the very soul do very little toward the reception of the remarkable supernatural favors which God grants in this state. They do not fall within the province of the soul's natural ability, or work, or diligence, but God alone grants them to her.<sup>1</sup>

This work of God in the soul is the highest stage of unitive love possible while one is still in the body. The love itself will continue to mature in quality and at times there will be deep "substantial touches" when the soul appears inflamed with God, but the "union of love" effected in the total transformation experience can be no greater until the "beatific union" is realized in the hereafter. The reason that this stage of unitive love is so ultimate is seen in the nature of the transformation union which takes place between God and the soul. Thus a level of union is established through it which results in a mutual interpenetration of substances between God and the soul, with the result that the soul metaphysically experiences the very nature of God Himself in its substance. This means that the soul is capacitated to love God substantially with His own divine love and can thereby give Him what is greater than itself. In this sense the soul becomes equal with God, for its will is His Will, and its love is His love. Habitually the soul is now totally transformed into this highest level of union,

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 35, vi.



though actually the experience is transient due to the soul's embodiment in its present existence. But John of the Cross sees in this stage of unitive love not only a higher degree, but also a significant metaphysical advance in the union itself.<sup>1</sup> It is the transition from the most intimate of communion to the earliest stages of complete union with God.

The maturation and intensification of the unitive love within the union experience itself also require brief attention.

Unitive Love: Maturing and Inflaming Degree. No presentation of John's doctrine of unifying love would be complete without noting the extensive emphasis which he gives to the "inflaming" experiences in this "union of love" and the maturational elements which seemingly come only by making it a way of life for many years.

To illustrate this, he relates degrees of love to degrees of spiritual health. Thus a soul without "a single degree of love is dead," but when it possesses some "degrees of the love of God," it is then

---

<sup>1</sup>In this aspect he apparently differs from his colleague St. Theresa, who teaches only a relational distinction between spiritual betrothal and spiritual marriage. However, the difference is more in terminology than in the nature of their mystic experiences, as Dicken correctly indicates. Op. cit., pp. 463 ff.

alive and "in the measure that love increases, [the soul] will be healthier and when love is perfect she will have full health."<sup>1</sup> John is careful to point out, however, that this state of love never reaches the state of perfection until the lovers are "so alike that one is transfigured in the other and only then is the love in full health."<sup>2</sup>

But for these spiritually healthy persons there are the "new wine" and the "old wine" degrees of love.<sup>3</sup> The new wine stage is the love of beginners when the maturing processes of fermentation have not yet been accomplished. The old wine degree is the love of those who "are exercised and tried in the service of the Bridegroom." These more mature lovers hardly ever fail God in anything, "for they now stand above all that would make them fail Him." The basis of this advanced strength is that their love is not only fermented and purged of the lees, but it is even spiced "with the perfect virtues [of the Spirit] which do not let it go bad."<sup>4</sup>

Unifying love is also compared to a wine cellar with seven degrees of maturity. The seventh and final cellar is the most intense

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 11, xi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 11, xii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 25, x and xi.

and burning wine, but it represents the wine of union, the wine of perfect "God-fearing love."<sup>1</sup>

The above gradations of love are experienced on the habitual level of divine union to greater or lesser degrees of maturity, but when St. John testifies of his experiences in the "living flame of love," he is speaking not of habitual union but of something far more sublime. The distinction is made by comparing the fire of logs to the flames which leap from the fire. The habitual experience of unitive love is the constant experience of the heat of God's presence and divine affection. But occasionally there occurs the contact with the searing flame of God's love. This is not an experience of divine love that is different in kind from that of union with God, but it is of "a deeper quality and is more perfect."<sup>2</sup> Thus the more degrees of this love the soul has "the more deeply it enters into God and centers itself in Him."<sup>3</sup>

John of the Cross clearly teaches, then, that the ever-spiraling experience of knowing God in Himself and of becoming united with Him through love by faith is an experience with no summit in this

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 26, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Flame, Prologue, iii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1, xiii.

life, except those limitations imposed by man's bodily existence. In the words of St. Paul, it is a life of apprehending but never fully apprehending what is the height and depth and breadth of the love of God in Christ Jesus. John goes so far as to say there are two distinctive ways of being united with God through love. The one grows out of the other. The first of these is the "union of love alone" which is basic and foundational to the other. The second is the "union with an inflaming love" which is the perfected degree of the former. The first "signifies the Church Militant in which love is not enkindled to an extreme," while the inflaming love union "signifies . . . the Church Triumphant where this fire is like a furnace blazing in the perfection of love."<sup>1</sup>

Like the flames of a fire, however, this penetration of the soul into the Church Triumphant is transient and momentary in this

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame, I, xvi. It is difficult to understand why Kavanaugh and Rodríguez translate estas dos maneras de unión as: "these two kinds of union." Such a distinction is not necessary linguistically, nor is it feasible theologically. Certainly there are not two "kinds" of love in God, so how could there be two "kinds" of union in this one love? John of the Cross is always explicit to define unitive love as an infusion from and of God Himself, so the "two unions" in this love are but degrees of experiencing the one and the same love in varying degrees of unitive intensity. Also, the word maneras in John's writings is used far more in the context of mode and degree than as a difference in clase, especia, or genero. Kavanaugh and Rodríguez, op. cit., p. 585.

life. It is the beatific degree of love that will be experienced permanently when the "veil" is torn between this life and the next, but for now the veil can be lifted only briefly to allow "touches" and "foretastes" of the glory that is revealed in its fullness solely in the eschaton.

So now abideth still--"faith, hope, and love,"--but the greatest of these three God-given virtues is love, because it is His very essence!

#### IV. The Relative Permanency and Intensification of Divine Union

Two related questions in the doctrine of divine union in St. John's theology which remain to be answered are: (1) the matter of its relative permanency, and (2) the developmental aspects that are involved in it. Is the unitive experience a permanent way of life for those who reach it, or is it a profound spiritual experience which occurs only occasionally? Are the developments and maturative elements in divine union realizable in the present, or, must these await fulfillment eschatologically? These are practical questions and relevant to the theme at hand, for John's purpose in writing is not primarily to expound theology but to lead his readers into the daily practice and experience of union with God.

The Relative Permanency of the  
Present Experience

The answer to the question of whether or not the unitive experience is permanent requires reply at two levels: the present experience of it, and, the eschatological hope of it. John of the Cross teaches both. The matter requires division into its distinctive parts in order to be adequately analyzed. Accordingly the relative permanency of the unitive experience will be presented under the following aspects of the issue: (1) the permanent elements of divine union, (2) transient elements of divine union, and, (3) awareness of the union.

Permanent Elements of Divine Union. The divine union experience is metaphorically portrayed in John of the Cross by the spiritual marriage analogy and in regard to its being a permanent union or a transient one, a modern reply can be given by stating that the Mystical Doctor knows of no reasons or possibility for divorce. By its very nature the union is a superlative way of life rather than an occasional experience in Christian perfection. Rather than being a superior relationship between God and the soul, it is a dynamic transformation which radically changes all the operations of the soul.

Thus the term "union" as employed by John, is more than a new relational experience with God, and it is more than just an

operational cooperation between God and the soul. It is more personal in nature than just a dialogical or communion awareness of God. It is a permanent and dynamic change which the Holy Spirit effects in the soul through repentance to cause the will to habitually love God and His will only, the intellect to habitually think God and His thoughts only, and the memory to habitually remember only the knowledge that God gives it. The basic elements in this change, then, are repentance, the work and sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, habit, and the operations of the soul.

To describe John's doctrine of purgation and contemplation in more common terminology--it is a turning away from everything in one's soul that is not God, and a complete openness to receive the Life, Light, and Love of God in His Being. This is repentance in the form taught by Christ and the Apostles, and it is indispensable for Christian growth and perfection. John of the Cross teaches that it can be practiced to such a degree that repentance becomes a way of life in which its necessity almost disappears because its effects become habitual in the soul.

Nevertheless, the principal element in the doctrine of divine union is not repentance. It is the person, work and sovereignty of God the Holy Spirit. This is what gives the union experience its permanent nature, because it is only by the Spirit's operation in the soul that

repentance and the dynamic transformation is effected. The proportionate means which the Holy Spirit employs to realize the soul's sanctification and perfection are the divinely infused powers called faith, hope, and love. These elements of divine grace eventually exercise complete control over the intellect, memory, and will of man, respectively, and thus maintain the permanency of the "habitual union" between God and man.

Habit is another significant element in the union experience which adds to its permanency. John of the Cross calls it "the habitual union"<sup>1</sup> because a practical description of its nature would necessarily include the causal effects of habit in the soul's faculties as the processes of repentance and sanctification intensify. The power of habit is recognized in John's theology as an integral part of meditation and contemplation, which are vital to realization of divine union.

Each time a person through meditation procures some of this knowledge and love he does so by an act. Many acts, in no matter what area, will engender a habit. Similarly, the repetition of many particular acts of this loving knowledge becomes so continuous that a habit is formed in the soul. God, too, effects this habit in many souls, without the precedence of at least many of these acts as a means, by placing them at once in contemplation.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent, III, 2, viii. Cf. also ibid., II, 5, ii--"the obscure habit of union."

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 14, ii.



John also compares habit to the increasing heat of fire as it consumes wood. Flames, like acts, leap from the fire, but soon the flames become a part of the fire's very heat.<sup>1</sup> So it is with the beginning "acts" leading toward divine union. It is a part of the method God uses in making a person spiritual:

He begins by communicating spirituality, in accord with the person's littleness and small capacity, through elements that are exterior, palpable, and accommodated to sense. He does this so that by means of the rind of those sensible things, in themselves good, the spirit making progress in particular acts and receiving morsels of spiritual communication may form a habit in spiritual things and reach the actual substance of spirit. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The other element in the unitive experience which requires attention is in the make-up of the soul itself: the intellect, memory, and will. These dynamic and functional faculties are the sphere of the operational union of God and man but their oneness with the Creator is only part of the unitive experience. While the union with God is more dynamic than the term "operational" implies, it is nonetheless applicable in distinguishing this aspect of union from the substantial, or creational, one. John's emphasis is that man's operative faculties are so given over to and absorbed by God that man becomes Christ-like to an extraordinary degree in all his understanding.

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame, I, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, II, 17, v.

knowledge, disposition, and actions. This likeness to Christ is rooted in John's doctrine of man's adoptive union with God through participation in the divine nature. Accordingly, then, when God infuses His nature into the substance of man's soul, He also controls the operations of the soul and thus the whole life. This divine infusion makes possible two significant operations for man: (1) he can return to God as an act of worship that which is greater than himself, namely God's own love and divinity, and (2) he can function in the world in precisely the manner that Christ functioned in the flesh.

Thus, through the union experience, man can become divine in his operations both toward God and toward the world, and in substance, though he is still fully human, he actually can partake of the divine nature. This divinization of the human faculties, and consequently of the human operations, is, according to John of the Cross, a work of God in the soul which effects a permanent state of habitual union with Himself, and therefore in the habitual sense it is a permanent and enduring union.

The Transient Elements of Divine Union. There are aspects of the unitive experience with God which are not permanent, and these need to be indicated also.

In explaining the nature of the sublime union which he teaches, John of the Cross states that while he is presently speaking "of the

obscure habit of union," he will "explain later how a permanent actual union of the faculties in this life is impossible; [for] such a union can only be transient."<sup>1</sup> Thus he clarifies that it is the "actual" elements of the unitive experience which are not permanent. This is verified in other passages where he distinguishes between the habitually permanent union which God effects in the soul, and the "temporal transformation" caused by God in which the divine "spiration" of God is reciprocally passed from God to the soul, and from the soul to God. This latter union can occur with "notable frequency and blissful love" in this life, but can never be "in the open and manifest degree proper to the next life."<sup>2</sup> In a similar passage, the Mystical Doctor discusses the actual laying hold of the soul on God by impelling love, which results in the step of actual union and soul "satisfaction." But in spite of this delight and "certain glory," the soul is able to experience such glory "for only short periods of time."<sup>3</sup> In other places the actual unions are called "awakenings of the Beloved,"<sup>4</sup> but basically these momentary experiences of overwhelming love are too filled with divine

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 5, ii.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle, 39, iv; cf. also Canticle, 26, xi.

<sup>3</sup>Night, II, 20, iii.

<sup>4</sup>E. g., Flame, 4, xiv-xv.

glory for the soul to experience them over extended periods or with great frequency. By the very quality and intensity of the divine glory inherent in them, they have to be transient unions with God, or otherwise the soul would be separated from the body. Thus the "actual union" of the substance of the soul with the essence of God is a permanent part of the eschaton experience only, and can be known in this life as fleeting "touches" and "foretastes of the glory" to be revealed in the future. In the adoptive sense, the supernatural filiation of the soul to God is a permanent reality, for participation in the divine nature is a permanent work of Grace. But the actual touching of substances, which in John's theology has a more transforming effect than normal participation, is only momentary in this life, due to the fact that a permanent oneness of divine and human substances would tear the soul from the body. The full realization of this type of transformation is a part of John's doctrine of eschatological union when the body, in its present state, does not have to be preserved and the soul is free for substantial transformation, but without losing its creaturely nature in the process.

The Awareness of Divine Union. A summary statement about the soul's awareness of the unitive activity and reality, will conclude this section. In many passages John of the Cross indicates that a full

awareness of the unitive experience is not necessary for its permanency. This is his purpose in distinguishing the "actual" from the "habitual" union. The latter is a way of life for the contemplative that has been infused with the divine presence and may not always result in the delight and interior sensations which accompany the more intense experiences of the "flame of love." The Beloved is permanently present in the soul, and although the soul may not "feel" this reality continually, it is nonetheless true. However, there are those special occasions when God seems more real than life itself as John indicates in The Living Flame of Love. In this unique treatise he testifies of frequent personal experiences of a deep and inflaming awareness of God's presence and glory in his soul.<sup>1</sup> This type of intense feeling and delight appears to be the exception rather than the rule in John's personal awareness of God's activity and the soul's response during the divine union experience.

#### The Relative Permanency of the Eschatological Elements

The eschatological aspects of John's theology are not his primary concern, since his interest lies in leading souls to "divine

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Flame 4, xiv and xv.

union in this present life." But, one section of the Spiritual Cantic and portions from various other works are dedicated to discussing the eschatological fulfillment of what is but a foretaste here on earth.<sup>1</sup> The material falls into two major categories: (1) the theological necessity for eschatological union, and, (2) the divine assurance of eschatological union.

The Theological Necessity for Eschatological Union. The original "substantial union" of God with the soul is "always existing," but is dormant in the sense that God does not "always communicate supernatural Being" through it to the soul.<sup>2</sup> The substantial union does serve, however, as the basis for the "union of likeness" or what could also be called the "union of habit," which is effected by divine grace, through the process of "infused contemplation." But the union of habit can never be a complete union with God in this life, due to the soul's attachment to the body. The two are inseparable in the present age, except by some special act of God or by death. The body, however, is necessary to the soul, for it serves as the mechanism whereby the soul exteriorizes the expressions of its intellect, memory, and will, as well

---

<sup>1</sup>Cantic, 36-40.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent, II, 5, iii-iv.

as the faculties in the sensitive part of the soul. Thus the soul, habitually united with God, lives in the tension between its need of the body in this present existence, and its longing to be completely and "actually" united to God without the bodily limitations of this life.

In His mercy and grace, God partially meets this need of man by granting worthy souls "frequent" temporary transformations when they actually experience momentarily a foretaste (or morsel) of the complete union. These experiences cannot be made permanent in this present existence, since they are not compatible with the soul's embodied status and dependency as indicated above.

The soul lives in hope--in eschatological hope--that union with God will be so perfected in the age to come, and that the resurrection body will be so adapted to the eternal era that the glory of God will at last be seen fully. Hope will then possess its one supreme desire.

The Divine Assurance of Eschatological Union. The final stanzas of the Spiritual Canticle are taken up with the eschatological hope which Christ, as the Bridegroom, holds out to the bride. He assures the soul that in the age to come He will transform her into the "beauty of both His created and uncreated wisdom" and also into "the

beauty of the union of the Logos with His humanity. "<sup>1</sup> Beyond this, the soul will partake of the very "essence of glory" which is Christ's and which He predestined for the bride from before the foundation of the earth.

The soul will also realize a love in eternity that is equal with God's love, for in this present life, the soul is not capable of loving Christ with the same quality and degree of love that He loves it. Even in the unitive experience this problem still exists. What is lacking is the "strong union of glory" when the soul will attain the excellence and power of the love wherewith God loves it. Thus in the age of glory the soul will be able to love God as it is loved by Him.

As her intellect will be the intellect of God, her will then will be God's will, and thus her love will be God's love. The soul's will is not destroyed there, but it is so firmly united with the strength of God's will, with which He loves her, that her love for Him is as strong and perfect as His love for her, for the two wills are so united that there is only one will and love, which is God's. This strength lies in the Holy Spirit, in Whom the soul is there transformed, for by this transformation of glory He supplies what is lacking in her, since He is given to the soul for the sake of the strength of this love. <sup>2</sup>

The eschatological aspects of divine union are culminated in John's theology by his doctrine of "beatific transformation." The

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, 38, i.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 38, iii.



details of this future experience cannot be included in the present study, though the five topics below describe in summary fashion the essential elements of the concept:<sup>1</sup>

1. Perpetual "spiration" of the Holy Spirit from God to the soul, and from soul to God in a reciprocal manner.
2. Continual rejoicing in the "fruition of God" (the beatific vision).<sup>2</sup>
3. Perfection in the knowledge of creatures and of their orderly arrangement.
4. Eternally pure and clear contemplation of the Trinity.
5. Total transformation in the immense love of God without a loss of creaturely essence and individuality.

Thus in the life to come the soul is assured of the very life which the Father and Son reciprocally breathe in the Holy Spirit. The beatific vision, which is the revelation of the fullness of God's glory in Christ, will at last be realized by man in his own new body of glory. The loving knowledge of God will be a part of man's very being and

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 39, ii.

<sup>2</sup>The "beatific vision" is not only a part of John's doctrinal heritage, but it also represents in his theology the transition from audition as a means of faith to auditive vision as a means of glory.

will include the divine knowledge from the perspective of the creation. Full and clear contemplation of the triune nature of God will be possible and will be eternally realized, and finally the whole soul in some way will be transformed into the plenitude of God's essence as Love--and consequently the transient aspects of actual union will be changed to the eternal union of substances. The soul will not cease to be a human individual but it will be so united with God's essence that it will be both human and divine by its immediate participation in the Son's union with man through the Incarnation.

## PART V

### A THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE TEACHINGS OF JOHN OF THE CROSS

In concluding this study of the theology of John of the Cross, it is pertinent that his major contributions to theological thought be noted and that a critical assessment of his theology in general be attempted. Accordingly, then, the contributions are presented below in the context of his threefold emphasis upon epistemology, sanctification, and divine-human oneness and, in addition to these, other contributions are singled out for consideration because of their special relevance to the theological scene of the twentieth century. The assessment follows this and seeks to denote the weaknesses and strengths of John's theology in relation to its permanent value for Christian doctrine.

#### I. Principal Contributions of John of the Cross to Theological Thought

##### Contributions to the Doctrine of Epistemology

One word of caution requires iteration before outlining John's major constructive emphases in theology. It would be a gross injustice to his thought and experience if it were construed that the Carmelite

saint began his doctrine with a "theory of epistemology." Nothing in John is so a priori. He begins only with the Word and listens to God speak to him through it. He empirically experiences God in the Word and is compelled by its truth to be obedient to it and to it [to Him] alone. Thus John does not begin by asking, "How can God be known?", but rather he begins by seeking to know God in His Word as He actually reveals Himself. Ultimately this leads him to an experience of God that has commanded the attention of the simple and the sophisticated for centuries.

Basic Affirmation of the Intuitive Character of Divine

Knowledge. As has been noted previously, John of the Cross was probably schooled in three distinctive schools of epistemology as pertaining to the character of divine knowledge: the illuminative concept of Augustine, the abstractive method of scholasticism, and the intuitive idea of Duns Scotus. The historical origin of John's epistemology is not of signal importance, but the working of it out into experience and expression makes him unique in the pages of Christian theology.

Rather than seek a knowledge of God by a special illumination inherent in man's creaturely nature, or out of the ideas and concepts abstracted from the senses and deduced from human reasoning (which in any case would be a secondary or derived knowledge), John of the

Cross teaches that divine knowledge is apprehended directly through intuition rather than indirectly through discursive logic. Thus the cognition that man can have of God is direct instead of secondary, personal instead of speculative, and empirical instead of rationalized. No intermediary is necessary, not even human intellect, to acquire this knowledge of God. It is not reasoned out by the intellect into speculative theories about God's nature and His works. It is not obstructed by a priori ideas detached from experience, nor is it grounded in a pure "feeling of dependence" which ultimately falls away into sentiment and subjectivism. It is a knowledge of God that is immediately evident in the soul through the experience of direct intuition as this is mediated through the divine Word and "felt" in the divine touches. John's knowledge of God, then, is a posteriori in character for he experienced it not apart from the Scriptures but through them within the context of the Church. The working out of all this in worship and experience led John of the Cross through the Scriptures to empirical contemplation, which is actually the apprehension process of intuition in his system and the basis for the unitive experience itself.

Principal Theological Elements of John's Concept of Divine Knowledge. Having noted that John of the Cross does not begin by adopting a theory of gnosiology as such, but by seeking to know God

directly out of His Word, it is worthwhile to point out the principal theological elements in the intuitive character of his inquiry into God. These are not listed in any significant order, but each of them forms a part of the doctrinal foundation underlying John's whole theological structure.

One of the major themes in John's empirical knowledge of God is the deep rootage it has into the sovereignty and grace of God. This is seen on every page of his theology as he denudes the soul of all self-confidence in its intellect, memory, and will. By the time man is capable of divine knowledge, John shows him standing absolutely devoid even of the least pelagian hope in his own mental and volitional powers. The initiative for divine knowledge is lodged securely in God and His sovereign will to reveal Himself. No amount of religious deeds, knowledge, devotions, or practices will necessarily result in the direct experience of God's Being. In John's theology, man's only role in acquiring a knowledge of God is to recognize his personal inability to know God by his own efforts, accomplishments, and acumen, and to receive God's sovereignly given revelation through His Word by His Spirit. Never did a theologian teach with greater clarity the utter futility of man's attempting to know God by his own name. In fact, John repeatedly shows that the only obstacle to a personal and intuitive

knowledge of God is whatever particle of self dependence might remain in the soul of those persons desiring to know God.

This insistence by John of the Cross upon the divine sovereignty and grace is, of course, traceable to dual aspects in the nature of God: His loving volition and His absolute wisdom. For John, God is not an impersonal object of man's knowledge, but is a voluntary Being whose self knowledge is not given to man through the natural mode of simple causality. Thus the fact that cognition of Him is obtained solely by His willed activity, takes away all cooperative efforts on the part of the soul. Man can be only the obedient receiver in John's concept of divine knowledge, and any cognition of God he acquires is wholly contingent on the divine will and intelligence.

But God wants to reveal Himself because His nature is also love. Thus the will of God is not a deterministic or a capricious aspect of God's nature, but is grounded in divine grace and wisdom for all men. Here again a misunderstanding could occur if John's doctrine of love is not comprehended as being rooted in the divine intellect as well as the divine will. It is "loving knowledge" that God communicates when He reveals Himself, since His self revelation proceeds not only from the divine will, but from the divine intellect as well. This is basic to John's theology, for though the knowledge of God enters man's

soul through both the will and the intellect, it does not originate in the divine will alone. The divine omniscience is a correlative of the divine will and love. Thus grace in John's theology is never divine arbitrariness or mystical inscrutability, but is instead the divine loving intellect exercising itself through divine volition.

The knowledge of God in John's theology is a rational experience by its divine content and its reception in man's rational faculty. As was noted previously, the Mystical Doctor is not teaching that divine union involves man in a sub-rational, irrational, or extra-rational knowledge for his mystical system is itself proof of this fact. Though passively acquired through the Word, it is completely rational in content and ontological in nature.

This does not mean that John's theology is merely the product of His own reason, which essentially would be a kind of self-knowledge, but it indicates that he recognizes the supernaturalness of God's revelation and acts in humble submission to it. In other words, his theology is rational in the sense that the knowledge of God which man receives is rational in content though it is not rationally acquired by the efforts of man's intellect.

His insistence that the human intellect be stilled before divine knowledge can enter, is completely in accord with the rational nature



of his approach. How can a direct knowledge of God be received if the intellect is occupied with speculative and abstractive ideas about God in a secondary and impersonal manner? But John knows of no cognition of God that is not rationally revealed and supra-rationally beyond man's ability to attain by his own efforts. But John also dedicates entire chapters of his writings to combating the tendency toward extra-rationalistic revelations of God (visions, locutions, etc.), sub-rationalistic concepts of God (images, oratories, etc.), and irrationalistic experiences of God (purely emotional feelings). In other words, he teaches an objective knowledge of God proceeding directly from the Word without any admixture of human subjectivity whether it be discursive reasoning about the revelation or purely imaginative reasoning from perceptual knowledge. This fact appears paradoxical at first, since John is so radical in his denial of any role for the active intellect in man's acquisition of divine knowledge, but in his theology this knowledge is sufficiently objective that man's response to it can be called a "union of love." His whole purgation process, which underlies every page of his writings is bent on objectifying one's knowledge of God. A speculatively acquired knowledge of God or an emotionally acquired one would be simply subjective cognitions of God, which basically are only reflections of man's creaturely selfhood. The soul, then, must rid

itself of all concepts, images, emotions, memories, and attachments which in any way tend to subjectivize or distort one's knowledge of God. To know God out of Himself the soul has to distinguish what is known from the knowing of it, or, as Tillich expresses it: there must be a "cognitive distance" before there can be a "cognitive union."<sup>1</sup> John of the Cross accomplishes this essential distinction through his doctrine of detachment, called the active and passive nights of purification.

The result of such objectivity in John's theology is the epistemological position in which the knower is found in relation to God, for, only as man <sup>distinguishes</sup> separates himself from his knowing can he really know God in Himself. Intuitive cognition in the theology of John of the Cross is one in which the knower is thrown upon the objective reality of God in Himself, and thus is beyond and independent of the subjective analysis by the knower. It is knowing God out of His very Being and in accordance with His own personal testimony to Himself in the Word, rather than a secondarily acquired knowledge from ideas related to God through creation or discursive reasoning. This is not

---

<sup>1</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 105.

a knowledge, however, which is mystical in the sense that it circumvents the Divine revelation in the Word. Such a method would not only be irrational for John, but it would be a form of subjectivism which, for John of the Cross, would not be God speaking, but only the reflection of one's own intellect, memory, or will. Such a knowledge is no knowledge, in John's system. It is a mirror of self-love and self-thinking about God.

Nothing is more significant in the writings of John of the Cross than his insistence upon empirical hearing as the means of faith.<sup>1</sup> His theology is filled with the contrast between the "seeing" mode of knowledge in the eschaton and the hearing mode of knowing God in the present. It is for this reason that he takes such a dim view of visions, images, and other physical and mental concepts which tend to direct the soul's dependence toward optical revelation instead of auditive. In fact, John is careful to warn his readers against any sensorially acquired knowledge of God that is not primarily a simply listening to God in His Word. Delightful tastes, pleasant odors,

---

<sup>1</sup>It is doubtful that there is any historical connection between the theologies of Luther and Calvin and that of John of the Cross, but the Carmelite is at one with them in the intuitive character of divine knowledge and in teaching intuitive hearing as the epistemological mode of a knowledge of God. John's emphasis here could be the working out of the Scotus ideas or, what is more probable, it is a Biblically derived concept from Paul, Job, and the Old Testament idea of hearing God instead of seeing Him.

beautiful religious sights, exhilarating feelings, and even supernatural locutions are all discouraged by John of the Cross, since they relate in one degree or another to subjective perceptions whose chief danger lies in not being objectively grounded in the Word. He repeatedly cites the passage in Romans where the Apostle declares that "faith comes by hearing," and in John of the Cross this hearing is always the ear of the soul attuned to the Word of God.

It is interesting to note that even in his eschatology, John relates the beatific vision to the Incarnate Word. It is an auditive vision of the Word which retains the function of the Logos as the revelation of the Father which must be heard, and yet it does not take away the element of audition as the mode for receiving the revelation. Thus the Word that John hears in the Scriptures is the Infinite and Eschatological Voice of God Himself revealing His nature of love through the Incarnate Son. This matter of hearing the Word is so real to John that his principal poems are dialogical encounters with God through the Word and Spirit and are only "morsels" and foretastes compared with the auditive vision of the Logos in the future.

The epistemological significance of this doctrine in John of the Cross has far-reaching implications. What he is propounding is an imageless relation to God through the hearing, because divine knowledge

out of the divine Being, in the final analysis, cannot be imagined either by the hands or by the mind. John endeavors to lead his readers away from "eye-thinking" to ear concepts. To him, an image of God in the intellect is no less a form of idolatry than an image made by hand since either of them can lead to a feeling of attachment or possession by the person. The problem with any kind of image is that it simply cannot convey God's true Being, and therefore, must always be fully transparent in function and purpose.

Here again it should be noted that John does not want to be interpreted as an image exorcist. He even recognizes a certain value in the use of images for contemplative "beginners" who need something visible to remind them and point them to the ontological reality they signify. He thus posits in the images the functional role of directing the worshipers beyond themselves to the truth which they in no wise can picture or describe. This truth simply cannot be ultimately known through eidetic symbols whether they be mental or otherwise. It can only be ascertained by its humble reception through submissive hearing.

#### John's Epistemological Method Related to Empirical Science.

It is significant in noting the theological contributions of John of the Cross to Christian thought that in many respects his basic epistemological method parallels that of rigorous empirical science. The

object of inquiry is, of course, radically different, because in John of the Cross the goal of his quest for truth is God Himself, while for the scientist it is usually some aspect of God's created universe. The methods employed are remarkably similar, however.

Perhaps the greatest parallel between the epistemology of John and that of empirical science is in the basic assumption that maximum objectivity is necessary on the part of the knower if truth is to be discovered. This was not an easy road for John of the Cross to take, since he lived not only in the medieval tradition of unquestioned acceptance of religious dogmas, but also during the zenith period of the Spanish Inquisition when any variation from Roman Catholic orthodoxy was under strong suspicion and serious condemnation. But John's basic approach to truth is objective from both the divine and human aspects.

From man's side, he requires absolute purgation of all preconceptions and pre-affections, since these inhibit the fullest penetration of a divine truth into the volitional and intellectual faculties of the soul. In John's mystical terminology this is called the active night of the soul, and its processes probe deep into the innermost recesses of the memory, the imagination, the mind, and the will. It is perhaps even more difficult to effect than the same procedure in the scientific

process where all personal bias and untested theory must be expurged from the mind if new truth is to be discovered. Preconceived ideas and unproven concepts have to be divested completely from the thinking of the knower if he is to arrive at new truth. "Only those who set aside their own knowledge and walk in God's service like unlearned children receive wisdom from God."<sup>1</sup> John quotes Isaiah 40:18-19, and interprets the prophet in the following manner:

It is as if Isaias had said that the intellect will not be able through its ideas to understand anything like God, nor the will experience a delight and sweetness resembling Him, nor the memory place in the phantasy remembrances and images representing Him.

Manifestly, then, none of these ideas can serve the intellect as a proximate means leading to God. In order to draw nearer the divine ray the intellect must advance by unknowing rather than by the desire to know, and by blinding itself and remaining in darkness rather than by opening its eyes.<sup>2</sup>

John even applies this divestment of a priori ideas and images to man's imagination where discursive meditation can evolve concepts and forms which impede the revelation from God. The reason for this divestment is that:

. . . the imagination cannot fashion or imagine anything beyond what it has experienced through the exterior senses,

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent I, 4, v.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 8, v.

that is, seen with the eyes, heard with the ears, etc. At the most it can compose resemblances of these objects that are seen, heard, or felt. But such resemblances do not reach a greater entity nor even as much entity as that of other sense objects. . . . all created things . . . are unproportioned to God's being, all imaginings fashioned out of their similarities are incapable of serving as proximate means toward union with Him. Rather, as we said, they serve for much less.<sup>1</sup>

"Those who imagine God through some of these figures (as an imposing fire or as brightness, or through any other forms) and think that He is somewhat like them are very far from Him."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the objectivity which John requires is as absolute as possible, for it includes not only preconceptions from the past, but also the mind's imaginations of God in the present. All must be emptied to allow God's Being to enter.

. . . one has to follow this method of disencumbering, emptying, and depriving the faculties of their natural rights and operations to make room for the inflow and illumination of the supernatural. If a person does not turn his eyes from his natural capacity, he will not attain to so lofty a communication; rather he will hinder it.

Thus, if it is true--as indeed it is--that the soul must journey by knowing God through what He is not, rather

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 12, iv f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 12, v.



than through what He is, it must journey, insofar as possible, by way of the denial and rejection of natural and supernatural apprehensions.<sup>1</sup>

Someone may object that this doctrine seems good, but that it results in the destruction of the natural activity and use of the faculties, and that man then lives in oblivion like an animal and, even worse, without remembrance of natural necessities and operations. The objection will be made that God does not destroy, but perfects nature, and that the destruction of nature is a necessary consequence of this doctrine. For, according to these instructions the carrying out of the natural operations and of the moral and rational acts would be forgotten. None of this could be remembered due to the deprivation of concepts and forms, the means of reminiscence.

I answer that this is actually so. For the more the memory is united with God, the more the distinct knowledge is perfected, until the memory loses it entirely; that is, when the soul is perfect and has reached the state of union.<sup>2</sup>

John's epistemological method and that of empirical science have in common, then, the calling in question of all presuppositions, attachments, ideas, and imaginations. Complete detachment (objectivity) from a priori concepts and a radical attachment to God (the Object) are required to allow a real penetration into the inner intelligibility of the object. The method of study is totally a posteriori, and it is carried through on a completely empirical basis.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 2, ii f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., III, 2, vii f.

From the divine side, the Mystical Doctor insists that, due to the nature of the object (God), the truth must be self-revealed rather than knower-manipulated, since:

[God] has fixed natural and rational limits by which man is to be ruled. A desire to transcend them, hence, is unlawful, and to desire to investigate and arrive at knowledge in a supernatural way is to go beyond the natural limits. It is unlawful, consequently, and God who is offended by everything illicit is displeased.<sup>1</sup>

God is not forced, through experimentation, to give up His secrets, for He wills to do so whenever the proportionate means for His self-revelation are established between Himself and the knower. In John's writings this process is called the passive night of the soul and the proportionate means is faith alone. The parallel with rigorous empirical science is apparent again, for, whenever possible, the empirical scientist allows the object of his inquiry to reveal its own truth rather than seeking to impose the weight of traditionalism and manipulation upon the object. The proportionate means for acquiring a knowledge of the object varies with the nature of the object, but it must bear a substantial relationship to the object, or, otherwise, truth cannot be ascertained in science or religion. In John's theology ~~the~~

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 21, i.

this is accomplished by a transformation of the soul in order to accommodate it for the divine knowledge. He describes the effects of this transformation as follows:

My intellect departed from itself, changing from human and natural to divine. For, united with God through this purgation, it no longer understands by means of its natural vigor and light, but by means of the divine wisdom to which it was united.

And my will departed from itself and became divine. United with the divine love, it no longer loves in a lowly manner, with its natural strength, but with the strength and purity of the Holy Spirit; and thus the will does not operate humanly in relation to God.

And the memory, too, was changed into presentiments of eternal glory.

And finally, all the strength and affections of the soul, by means of this night and purgation of the old man, are renewed with divine qualities and delights.<sup>1</sup>

John quotes Aristotle in support of his interpretation of the activity of God in the intellect:

. . . we must presuppose a certain principle of the Philosopher: that the clearer and more obvious divine things are in themselves, the darker and more hidden they are to the soul naturally. [Aristotle, *Metaphys.*, lib. brevior, c. 1, ed. Didot, 486] The brighter the light, the more the owl

---

<sup>1</sup>Night II, 4, ii.

is blinded; and the more one looks at the brilliant sun, the more the sun darkens the faculty of sight, deprives it and overwhelms it in its weakness.

Hence when the divine light of contemplation strikes a soul not yet entirely illumined, it causes spiritual darkness, for it not only surpasses the act of natural understanding but it also deprives the soul of this act and darkens it.<sup>1</sup>

This aspect of his scientific method is illustrated by John with an analogy of a traveler on an unknown road. He cannot be guided by his own knowledge, since he has not been this way before. But:

. . . he cannot reach new territory nor attain this added knowledge if he does not take these new and unknown roads and abandon those familiar ones. Similarly, when a person is learning new details about his art or trade, he must work in darkness and not with what he already knows. If he refuses to lay aside his former knowledge, he will never make any further progress. The soul, too, when it advances, walks in darkness and unknowing.

Since God, as we said, is the master and guide of the soul, this blind man, it can truly rejoice, now that it has come to understand as it has here, and say: in darkness, and secure.<sup>2</sup>

The same analogy is referred to in the Canticle, where he says:

. . . it ought to be known that where a soul treading the spiritual road has reached such a point that she has lost

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 5, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 16, viii.

all roads and natural methods in her communion with God, and no longer seeks Him by reflections, or forms, or sentiments, nor by any other way of creatures and the senses, but has advanced beyond them all and beyond all modes and manners, and enjoys communion with God in faith and love, then it is said that God is her gain, because she has certainly lost all that is not God.<sup>1</sup>

This points up a third parallel between the epistemological method of John of the Cross and that of science. It is in regards to the reaction of the knower toward the truth revealed to him.

In the theology of John, the only reasonable response of man to the self-revelation of God is that of submissive obedience. But this is not a quietistic experience in which the knower remains motionlessly docile. John calls the process "contemplation," and it involves both the passive and active aspects of faith as obedience and adoration. The cycle of divine knowledge is established which produces increased obedience, sanctification, adoration, and a personal awareness of God. And, since it is God in His very essence that man gets to know, it ultimately leads in John of the Cross to divine transformation of the knower into an ontological union with God.

Empirical science requires a similar response from its inquirer. The greater the obedience, submission and reverence of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 29, xi (author's underlining).

scientist to already acquired truth, the greater his potential is for discovering new truth. And, while the scientist is not necessarily transformed into the object of his inquiry due to the impersonal nature of the object, it is true that he can be illumined by the truth revealed through his experimentation.

Other aspects of the similarity between the empirical approach of John of the Cross and that employed by science could be noted, but what is significant for the present study is the fact that John used this approach, and he used it at a time when it was unpopular and distinctively unique from the unscientific methods and procedures of his day.

#### Contributions to the Doctrine of Christian Perfection

In addition to his epistemological contributions to theological thought, John of the Cross added to the Church's knowledge of God-effected sanctification by his doctrine of Christian perfection. This study is contained in his repeated references to "infused contemplation" and the "touches of God" during the sanctifying process necessary for divine-human union. It is not surprising, however, that this contribution of the Carmelite saint is cast along the lines of incarnational polarity and unity, since he gives such remarkable prominence to the Word and the Spirit in his writings.

The Incarnational Patterns for Christian Perfection. The adoration reception of divine knowledge proceeding out of God Himself is, according to John's theology, a bi-polar matter. It requires first a self knowledge through purgation on the part of man, and this in turn results in his becoming more truly human. With this type of preparation, man is able to receive incarnationally the divinity of God, or, to put it in other terminology, he is able, by the sanctification of his humanity, to be united with the essence of God by participation in the triune relations of God.

At the same time, this adoration apprehension of God on the part of man also requires an incarnational accommodation on the part of God, whereby He lifts man up into volitional conformation, adoptive sonship, and dialogical communion with Himself. This pole in the experience of contemplation is its unitive stage, and the previous one is the experience of contemplation in the discursive meditation stage. Both are equally indispensable in the process of Christian perfection, according to John of the Cross.

In addition to these subject-object relationships in John's doctrine of contemplation there is also involved in the whole epistemological process of his theology the doctrine of elective grace, or what he calls "infused contemplation." This is also Christological in pattern.

In it God rejects every attempt by man's intellect, memory, and will to project themselves into the divine knowledge (the purgative effects of infused contemplation) and in the same proportion He incarnates His divine "loving knowledge" into the human sphere (the unitive effects of infused contemplation) by His special sovereign "touches in the soul."<sup>1</sup> Thus on the one extreme there is divine rejection, and on the other extreme divine inclusion. The two movements are both the work of God to effect Christ's nature in each of His children.

How all this is practically "worked out" has been noted previously under the study of empirical contemplation, but a brief review of the theological bases underlying these capital elements in John's system will indicate that his theology is rooted deeply in the epistemological implications of the incarnation itself.

In the birth of Christ, God puts to one side the intellect, memory, and will of Joseph, as it were, and "infused" Jesus into the human realm, not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but by Himself alone. In this way He shows man what he is basically and

---

<sup>1</sup>It is this whole idea that makes necessary the categorical rejection of "acquired contemplation" as having anything to do with John's theology. Contemplation is no more acquired in his theology than the incarnation of Christ was acquired in human history. The two ideas are correlative in John's thinking.



rejects his speculative reasoning, his pride of memory, and the sentiment of his will as the means whereby he arrives at an acquaintance with God. Thus what God did historically and universally in Jesus Christ is shown by John of the Cross to be personally and empirically necessary in each particular soul.

Purgative contemplation is the divine means whereby God sets to one side all that man can do by his own faculties to acquire an ontological knowledge of God. The result is that the humanity that is thus purged is a sanctified humanity--a humanity conformed to God's will and emptied of self. In epistemological terminology this means that the object of God's revelation is now conformed or prepared to receive the divine wisdom and love. By this setting aside of man's intellect and will, God sanctifies them for His purpose and they become conformed to the nature of the ontological revelation that is divinely given.

But in the birth of Christ, God also "infuses" wisdom and love ("loving knowledge") into human existence, or what might be termed a divine accommodation of wisdom and love in terms of human comprehension. This is the union of divinity with humanity in Christ, and it is no wonder that when John of the Cross conceives of "pure contemplation" he is speaking also of "unitive contemplation," or the union of God with the soul. The terms that he employs to describe the function

and purpose of contemplation are incarnational in their origin, for in the experience of contemplation, it is God Himself that is communicated and thereby infuses the believer with Light, Love, and Life. To the degree that this divine presence, wisdom, and love is "received," God gives power to become His sons by union with Himself.

The Grounding of Christian Perfection in Divine Grace. In John's theology, contemplation is divinely given because it stems from God's elective grace. Man may acquire a knowledge about God through the coercion of nature, but he can never know God out of Himself by coercion nor apart from God's own election to reveal His identity. Thus it is God who calls in question the knower and seeks to purge him of all that which would impede the reception of His self-revelation. In John's theology purgative contemplation is as divinely infused as unitive contemplation. They are both two sides of the same action of God's elective grace. Accordingly, then, God unites Himself with the soul He has sanctified through the self-knowledge of purgation. It is all one work of God's grace in the same sense that the incarnation in history is totally of God's own choosing and proceeds wholly from His grace.

The Social Aspects of Christian Perfection. It is also significant that in his writings, John of the Cross places very little emphasis on the social obligations of believers. His emphasis is always on the

contemplative's inner relationship to God as this affects the nature and activities of his own spiritual life. However, John's biography portrays him as a theologian who was desirous of being a foreign missionary, and who was always occupied in rendering beneficent assistance to others. Why does this latter aspect of his daily living not appear more prominently in his writings?

The twentieth century religious scene is crowded with literature and appeals for greater social action by the church, and a utilitarian standard for judging the worth of religion is in vogue. But John's insistence on giving priority to man's inner spiritual development is a worthy antidote. He leads his readers to see the primary nature of man's relationship to God which, when properly fulfilled, issues in service and a right attitude toward others. His emphasis is that Christian perfection is the indispensable root which must be divinely implanted and cultivated before the fruit of social service properly ensues.

#### Contributions to the Doctrine of Divine Union

The character of divine knowledge is related in John of the Cross to God in Himself and the apprehension of that knowledge is cast along the lines of Christology. It is not surprising, then, that the

actual experience of that knowledge is associated with the doctrine of the Spirit. How does the intuitive knowledge of God which is apprehended through an incarnational mode become actualized in experience? John's answer is: by the Spirit. This truth has many relevant elements which bear noting as a part of John's contribution to theological thought.

The Christocentric Nature of the Experience. The place to begin in John's experience of union with God is with its Christocentric nature. Far from teaching a spiritual union with God which circumvents the Son, John's entire theological system finds its center of gravity in Christ, the Bridegroom. It is union with God in Christ through the Spirit that he teaches, but the emphasis on the centrality of Christ in this relation is the most prominent. Accordingly, then, his doctrine regarding the experience of divine knowledge is not a union of the human spirit with divine Spirit, but it is a union of man's humanity with Christ's divine and human natures in the Spirit. In this manner John holds in proper perspective both the objective and subjective elements in his empirically acquired knowledge of God. Thus while it is the Spirit-annointed Son who mediates the Spirit through His incarnation, death, resurrection, and glorification, it is, on the other hand, the Son-breathed Spirit who effects the union with Christ by actualizing the historical union of the divine and human in a particular

soul. In the colloquy of the bride and Bridegroom the union experience is not with some third divine entity called the Spirit (without the filioque), but it is an experience of union with the Son Himself which is divinely made possible, not by the will of man, but by the transformational work of the Spirit as He is breathed out by the Bridegroom Himself.

In this Christocentric union, John of the Cross is true to the Biblical emphasis on the Spirit's function as bearing witness not to Himself but to the Christ. The mysticism of John's theology is not a knowledge or experience of the Spirit which is immediate and separable from Christ. Rather it is the Pauline mysticism of union with Christ in which the Holy Spirit is known only through the self revelation of God in His Son. It is the mysticism of human sonship with God which proceeds from the Father through the Son and by the Spirit.

The Dialogical Method of the Knowledge. One of the major contributions of John's theology is that out of an environment of dialecticism in the academic theology of his day, he teaches a knowledge of God that maintains personal and dialogical relationship between God and man. This has been anticipated by the fact that his epistemology is basically intuitional in character and by the fact that his apprehension of divine knowledge is more adorational than discursive. Thus, in the

experience of the divine communication, the relation between the Revealer and the receiver is not a monologue where the receiver reasons with himself and thus becomes both the interrogator and the source of reply. Nor is it monological in the sense that the receiver is a mute tabla raza on which the divine revelation is written and accepted by some blind leap of irrational faith.

John of the Cross portrays the essential nature of the dialogical relation by means of a colloquy which is carried on between the soul and Christ under the symbols of bride and Bridegroom. They are both persons and they are engaged in a communion whereby Christ as the Word reveals Himself to the soul. This revelation is substantially the divine union which John of the Cross teaches, but its source and content is Christ Himself, and not some esoteric communication which is mediated independently of the Word. Furthermore, in the dialogical relation there is absolute fidelity in the sense that the communication between the soul and the Word is maintained without the admixture of dialectical reasoning or recourse to eidetic description.

Still another characteristic of the dialogical relation in John's theology is that it is not a matter of private or extra-rational knowledge. On the contrary, by John's very testimony it is an experience

which takes place within the piety and orthodoxy of the Church and is open to analysis by the rest of this divine community, and, in point of fact, it is a dialogical experience with the Word which has become an integral part of historical theology. The initiative in this dialogue remains with God, and it is He who establishes the personal communion by electing man and capacitating him for dialogue. He does this through the Logos and the Spirit by allowing the I-Thou relationship of intuition to be His divine means of self-revelation.

Divinization Effects of the Divine Union Experience. John's theology of divine union with the Word through the Spirit could devolve into merely an interiorization of Christian perfection were it not for his continued emphasis on the divinizational and operational effects of the union. By this it is meant that John's doctrine of man's participation in God and with God in His divine nature and operations is the means whereby he experiences more than just a moral and spiritual sanctification but his understanding also is caught up to where he can perceive that his real center of being is not in his own autonomous existence, but is in God Himself. Here again, it is the "in Christ" kind of union that John propounds and it is the work of the Spirit that elevates the soul out of itself into the greatness of God in His essential and operational modes.

To effect this enlarged role of man, the Spirit not only operates directly upon the intellect, memory, and will, but He also fulfills a capacitating function whereby the "goods" and nature of the Logos are communicated to the soul. The purpose of this is not to further interiorize the perfectionizing work of the Spirit but to equip man for his operational participation in the work of God. This concept in John's theology is not to be confused with the immanental idea in nature mysticism whereby a divine spark in man is merely fanned into brilliance. John's teaching is a more transcendental idea in that the "spiritual goods" of Christ are communicated as "touches" and "unions" in which the soul is actually a participant in the divine nature and soteriological work of the Eternal Logos.

All of this work of the Spirit in man must be held in proper perspective, however, for it is effected always in the context of God's elective grace and man's creatureliness. Man is not co-redeemer with Christ as if by his own goodness he could merit such a role and his sonship with God is only adoptive rather than natural in the sense of Christ's. Man is only instrumental in the operations of God, and it is the Spirit that infills him and capacitates him so that he becomes a participant in the divine essence and in saving actions of the Creator.

CRANES CREST



### Contributions to the Doctrine of Christian Worship

Two other related aspects of John's theology are extremely significant and deserve more than routine attention. They are his teachings regarding the use of images in religious devotion and his doctrine of grace apart from the sacraments. Both of these concepts in John of the Cross can serve as aids for removing the barriers to Protestant and Roman Catholic understanding on the doctrine of worship as related to images and the sacraments.

The Foundational Function of Images in Worship. Few Roman theologians have so thoroughly wrestled with the problem of images in relation to faith as has John of the Cross. Coming as he did in the long tradition and veneration of religious images which characterized the Spanish Church of the sixteenth century, the Carmelite monk found himself between the Biblical emphasis on auditive faith and an ecclesiastical emphasis on eidetic adoration. Was he to be an iconoclast or a conformist? Interestingly, his ultimate position was not unlike that of Calvin or Luther, though the manner he pursued in formulating his concept of images took a different form.

In the first place, John of the Cross deals with the subject of rosaries, paintings, and religious statues in the wider context of all

optical concepts of God, whether real or imagined, whether material or mental, whether handled by the hands or stored in the memory. The Mystical Doctor sees the problem of images not so much as a clear infraction of the second Commandment as Calvin advocates,<sup>1</sup> but, instead, he warns that in their mental and imaginary forms, images can become a part of the pre-affections that actually impede a true knowledge of God from being experienced.

Within the category of images, then, John includes all intellectual apprehensions arising from objects supernaturally represented to the exterior senses, all imaginative apprehensions imparted supernaturally to the interior senses, all spiritual apprehensions such as religious revelations, visions, locutions, and sensations, and all statues, paintings, rosaries, and oratories. From this broader base he defines the proper uses and the customary abuses of all images in general, and of statues, etc., in particular.

As a general principle, John is opposed to all images, whether tangible or intangible. His basis for this opposition is similar to that of the Reformers.<sup>2</sup> In the first place, God's nature is spiritual and

---

<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, Institutes, Book I, Chapter XI, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>The parallels between John's concept of image-thinking of God and the inner idolatry of the mind as taught by Calvin are apparent at many points. No historical connection between the two theologians

therefore no analogy whether physical or conceptual can be made which truly represents Him and in the second place there are the practical dangers involved of attaching oneself (in any degree) to the desire to see, hear, taste, smell, or feel something, whether exteriorly or interiorly, when the proper and proportionate means to a knowledge of God is faith and faith alone. John is adamant in his insistence on pure faith as the mode of divine revelation and human response. This faith comes only by hearing the Word, and not by seeking locutions or visions apart from the Word. The Discalced Carmelite does not deny the reality and possibility of special locutions, visions, sensations, etc., but he firmly cautions against all desire for these extra-Biblical revelations because they tend to incur the same dangers that tangible images possess, that of being substituted for faith and leading to unworthy attachments. In such cases, they become impediments to Christian perfection instead of aids to faith. They divert affection, devotion, and attention toward themselves, rather than to cast the recipient directly onto utter dependence in the Word and faith.

When John of the Cross comes to deal specifically with statues, paintings, rosaries, and oratories as aids to worship, his approach

---

is possible, but it is noteworthy that at this point their arguments are similar in theological basis, content, and purpose. Compare Ascent II, 10-32, and III, 35-42, with Institutes I, 9-12.

is necessarily ambivalent. The Mystical Doctor sees the primary value of these tangible objects as motivational for the will, and as inspirational for the memory.<sup>1</sup> They are to be used principally by "beginners" who need such motivation and inspiration in the foundational stages of their discursive meditation but the role of images in the ascending process toward divine union is very restricted by John of the Cross. Indeed, he is most severe in his censure of those whose adoration is directed to the images themselves instead of directed through the images to the realities they signify.<sup>2</sup>

In the final analysis, however, John remains clearly within the best Roman tradition regarding images and his emphasis against their abuse is commendable. His teachings regarding their dangers and restricted functions is also to his credit but he never goes as far as Calvin in relegating them to instructional and admonitional uses,<sup>3</sup> nor does he endeavor to give an exegesis or interpretation of the scriptural passages dealing specifically with images and their veneration.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ascent III, 35-41.

<sup>2</sup> E. g., ibid., 35:iv, viii; 38:ii, et al.

<sup>3</sup> Calvin, Institutes, op. cit., I, XI, 12.

The Saint's positive opposition to all types of images (real or imagined) which issue in attachments not grounded in faith is a constructive contribution to Roman Catholic theological thought. Furthermore, his inclusion of intellectual, imaginary, and supernatural apprehensions in the category of deterrents to faith, is also extremely helpful. This latter contribution is applicable to Protestants as well as to Roman Catholicism.

The Extra-Sacramental Experience of Divine Grace. Dr. John McKay once denominated the movement of John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila as a "breaking out of the confining belief that divine grace is administered only through the sacraments. The experiences of John and Theresa were empirical proof that God's grace is effective through simple faith and obedience."<sup>1</sup> In summary form, this is one of the Mystical Doctor's most significant contributions to the doctrinal development of the Roman Church. If accepted and emphasized it could have effected an early spiritual renewal in that church.

Spanish Theology during the medieval period was dominated primarily by the orthodoxy of Roman Catholicism, and this tended to make the doctrine of grace a matter of visible form which could be

---

<sup>1</sup>John McKay, in a personal interview with the author in Bogota, Colombia, 1962.

more or less controlled through the sacraments of the church. John of the Cross is within this tradition, and remains faithful to it insofar as initial or baptismal grace is concerned, and, insofar as persevering or eucharistic grace is concerned.<sup>1</sup> Thus he can speak of grace as a "state,"<sup>2</sup> and he affirms the uncertainty as to when a person is in divine grace and when he is not.<sup>3</sup> In John's theology, then, there is no depreciation of the sacraments and their power to bestow divine grace.

But the Mystical Doctor goes beyond the medieval concept to an experience of divine grace based wholly on one's relationship to God in faith. This is particularly borne out in his interpretation of John 1:16 where the cycle of grace is grounded in the Incarnation and its fruits, as God grants grace for grace because when He sees the soul "made attractive through grace, He is impelled to grant her more grace."<sup>4</sup> But this outpouring of divine grace is not controlled by ecclesiastical structures. Rather it represents the sovereign work and loving expression of God as He sees the soul clothed in the beauty of His love and grace. Thus, there is no ecclesiastical sacrament for

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Canticle 23:6 and Night I, 6 v.

<sup>2</sup>Flame, 4, xvi.

<sup>3</sup>Canticle 1, iv.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 33, vii.

John's experience of union with the very nature of God. It is a direct experience through the Word. It is this non-controllable aspect of divine grace that is effective in bringing about the Christian perfection which ultimately results in the divine-human union. Furthermore, this same non-sacramental Grace of God is the grace which maintains man's unitive experience with God even in its eschatological existence during eternity.

The principal contribution of John of the Cross to this doctrine is his emphasis on grace as grounded in the incarnation and appropriated by means of faith. Thus, the concept is liberated from sacerdotal control and broadened to become a more dynamic and personal manifestation of the very essence of God in Christ. But the doctrine does not lapse into mere sentimentalism or imaginary union with God. Instead, its incarnational basis gives it the freedom of the Spirit, but within the limitations of the Word. In this sense it represents a significant break-through for Roman Catholic theology.

Contributions to the Mystical Element  
in Christianity

Perhaps one of the greatest harms done to John of the Cross was not administered by his sixteenth century persecutors, but rather by the church herself during recent centuries when she has un-officially

given John of the Cross the title of Doctor Mysticus. Understood in the sense in which John employed the term "mystical," it is a most appropriate title for him. But, understood in the popular usage of the word, it has tended to relegate his teachings to a select few who have overly mystified what John intended to simplify.

The Significance of "Mystical" in John of the Cross. In the Ascent, Dark Night, and Canticle, John of the Cross alludes to the phrase "mystical theology" on various occasions, and these serve to clarify the definition and use which he makes of the term. In summary, it can be said that he does not mean mystical in the esoteric or occult sense, but mystical in the sense of imageless, ritual-less, institution-less, and without human accomplishment. For John of the Cross, the relationship between God and the soul is so personal, so divine, so supernatural, and so inexplicable that the only inclusive term he can use to describe it is "mystical." It is not something discovered by man but it is, instead, something revealed to man by God.

But the word never signifies in the Carmelite's writings an experience of God apart from the Word. Indeed, it is the very experience of God in the Logos (Verbo) that is so indescribably real, yet beyond verbalization and any possibility to imagine.



"Mystical theology" is synonymous with "infused contemplation" in John of the Cross,<sup>1</sup> and thus it is basically the experience of God. ("Scholastic Theology," on the other hand, is the term he reserves for studies about God.)<sup>2</sup> This experience of God is mystical because of: (a) its supernatural source, (b) its supernatural effects in the soul, and (c) its supernatural content which must be communicated through symbolic language.

As has been noted previously in the study of infused contemplation, the supernatural origin of this divine and human dynamic relationship is God working through the Word by the Holy Spirit. Thus it is God Himself giving His divinity in the person of the Bridegroom (the Word) to the bride (the soul) which constitutes the experience of mystical theology. The effectation of this supernatural mystery in the human soul is the infusing and ordering work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> The means employed by the Spirit to bring about this awareness of God is not a religious institution, a liturgical ritual, an ecclesiastical image, or even an ordained person. It is, instead, the very love of God

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 27, v, et al.

<sup>2</sup>Comp. Night II, 17, vi-viii, and Canticle, Prologue, iii.

<sup>3</sup>Night II, 17, iii.

Himself, and who can explain the mystery of love? John says that "mystical wisdom, which comes through love . . . need not be understood distinctly in order to cause love and affection in the soul, for it is given according to the mode of faith, through which we love God without understanding Him."<sup>1</sup>

The "mode of faith" in John's theology rules out the possibility of human reason as the source of his teachings. It is a "hidden and secret" knowledge that can only be acquired by experience, and by its very nature it cannot be produced "by the intellect which the Philosophers call the agent intellect," since it (the intellect) works upon "forms, phantasies, and apprehensions of the corporal faculties." But the Source of "Mystical Theology" is God, who produces the knowledge of Himself "in the possible or passive intellect" where only "substantial knowledge" is received without any "work or active function of the intellect."<sup>2</sup> Thus man's mind and sensory faculties are excluded as the origin of this theology, for the language of unitive contemplation is "the language of God to the soul, of Pure Spirit to the spirit alone and all that is less than spirit, such as the sensory, fails to perceive it . . . This wisdom is secret."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, Prologue, ii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 39, xii.

<sup>3</sup>Night II, 17, iv.

"Mystical Theology," then, is derived ultimately from God in the sense that the unitive experience to which it testifies is divinely given and surpasses man's linguistic potentialities to express. It probes into the loving nature of God so intimately that the infinite and inexhaustible Source of all Truth is essentially experienced, but only can be described as a completely new and unique awareness of God which is so radically distinct from all other experiences in its goodness and beauty that it is known as "a knowledge beyond knowing."

The empirical theology proclaimed by John of the Cross is also mystical because of the effects it produces in the soul. The wisdom and love communicated to the soul through the divine Word are "delightful" to the intellect and the will respectively.<sup>1</sup> The knowledge which is received by the intellect is without shape or image, because it transcends all sensory apprehension due to its origin in pure Spirit.<sup>2</sup> It is Truth without any form except that of Divine Love.

The ultimate effect of mystical theology is to hide the soul in God and to infill man with the divine nature, thereby making him a son of God. The use of these terms should not, however, separate John

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 27, v.

<sup>2</sup>Night II, 17, ii-iv.

of the Cross from the mainstream of theology. Rather it places him at the spiritual heart of true Christian tradition where St. Paul speaks of being "in Christ," and where Christ compares the disciples to branches abiding in Him. It is mystical and supernatural in the sense that the hypostatic union of Christ is a deeper and more unfathomable mystery but it is no less real and historical than the incarnation and the indwelling of Christ in His followers. It is in this sense that Kavanaugh and others affirm that "Mystical Theology" for John of the Cross is not a special doctrine reserved only for the theologically elite, but rather it is the theology of the most intimate personal awareness of God in daily life.<sup>1</sup> Far from being merely a theory or deduction about God, it is the communion through union experience of God in the soul with the cognitive and ontological effects of this on the intellect, the affections, and all of one's life.

The Relevance of "Mystical Theology" for Theological Thought.

This aspect of John's theology is his most comprehensive contribution to the field of theology, since it includes his Christocentric empiricism, his intuitional approach to divine knowledge, and his insistence on a direct awareness of the Word without the intermediacy of any mental

---

<sup>1</sup>Kavanaugh, op. cit., p. 59.

or external images. In all these senses it represents a crucial breakthrough in Roman Catholic thought, and it could serve the church as a whole in a further return to the theology of the Scriptures.

Mystical theology, in the sense which John of the Cross teaches it, is a break-through in the basic manner of thinking theologically. It advocates such a radical abandonment of all preconceived ideas and theories about God that it thrusts the church back to abject dependence on the Spirit for Truth. It also negates so completely the intellect and will of man in the sanctifying process that once again the follower of Christ finds himself with no one but God to turn to for the words of eternal life. This type of theology does not advocate the overthrowal of all theological knowledge, but it does demonstrate the complete inadequacy of all other knowledge to bring about the divine-human experience of oneness.

Mystical theology is also a break-through in the matter of God's sovereignty and grace. The church has taught this doctrine for centuries, but in practice it has always sought to cooperate with God in the exercise of His sovereignty and in the administration of His grace. John's theology is mystical precisely because its source and exercise reside in omnipotence and omniscience. It is God who determines who will be recipients of His sanctifying grace, and it is God alone who gives

Himself as grace for grace to those who are called "sons of God." No amount of religious manipulation on the part of man can affect God's sovereign will in this matter, since it is His own Being that He gives in the experience of grace.

Mystical theology is a break-through, too, in the proportionate means whereby God effects the union of Himself with man. This means is faith which on the active side results in purgation of everything in the mind and will which is not of divine origin, and on the passive side the result is an infilling of the soul by God of Himself. But it is not faith and intellectual accomplishments, nor is it faith and man's decision to become Christ-like. It is faith alone as absolute surrender to the work of Grace which God sovereignly effects in the soul.

In this sense, mystical theology is a relational break-through of soteriological significance, for with John of the Cross, the nature of salvation is not so much one's relationship to an institution, or to a ritual, or even to a creed. Instead, it is an empirical relationship to God Himself which is always Word-centered and Spirit-ordered and effected. This concept tends to de-institutionalize the role of the church and to result in a far more personal and experiential awareness of God. It brushes aside everything that traditionally tended to serve as intermediaries or dispensers between God and man. And, far from

minimizing the church, this reality vitalizes the life of the church into becoming the dynamic Body of Christ in a very ontological sense.

Furthermore, it moves the theological method of the church away from the human dialectic to the divine-human dialogue, and in this sense theology becomes an inquiry out of Reality itself (Himself) rather than mere speculation about Reality, and doctrine becomes a testimony of daily experience with the Word through grace.

The principal relevance of mystical theology for theological thought is the break-through it proposes for man's whole concept of divine knowledge, its reception, and man's communication of it. In regard to this latter factor, John of the Cross is keenly aware that the content of his experience with God inherently exceeds the bounds of human capabilities to describe it. It is not a theology grounded in nature mysticism or rooted in some type of analogia entis, for he expressly rejects these. It is founded on the believer's empirical relation with God in His own Being through divine grace and the Holy Spirit and ultimately this relation has to be described as "a certain I-don't-know-what."<sup>1</sup> It is a knowing in unknowing and a revelation in mystery. John calls it "a sublime trace of God as yet uninvestigated

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 7, ix.

and . . . a lofty understanding of God which cannot be put into words."<sup>1</sup>  
 The experience of God in divine union is "so lofty" that "advanced souls" are favored with a "knowledge by which they receive an understanding . . . of the grandeur of God," and they "understand clearly that everything remains to be understood."<sup>2</sup>

It is primarily in this sense that John of the Cross employs the term "mystery" as descriptive of his kind of theology, since the content of the divine union experience is never fully known, man can never count that he has apprehended, but he must go on apprehending in order that "the sweet knowledge of God,"<sup>3</sup> which is "secret or hidden"<sup>4</sup> will become more and more revealed as a "knowing by unknowing."<sup>5</sup> Accordingly John calls it a knowing "stripped of accidents," a knowing communicated by God supernaturally "according to the mode of faith,"<sup>6</sup> and a knowing which is "equivalent to God's communication of Himself to the soul."<sup>7</sup> This is the touch of human and divine substances when

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Canticle 27, v.

<sup>4</sup>Ascent II, 13-14; Night II, 3, vi; Flame 3, xxxii-xxxiv.

<sup>5</sup>Canticle 39, xii.

<sup>6</sup>Flame 3, xxxiv-xxxvii.

<sup>7</sup>Canticle 26, v.



the Eternal Word grants to the soul a certain "savor" of eternal life itself and the "unction of the Holy Spirit overflows into the body and all the sensory substance."<sup>1</sup>

As a result the soul tastes here all the things of God, since God communicates to it fortitude, wisdom, love, beauty, grace, and goodness, etc. Because God is all these things, a person enjoys them in only one touch of God, and the soul rejoices within its faculties and within its substance.<sup>2</sup>

This descriptive language by John of the Cross confirms his unitive experience with God as a cognitive, moral, and affectional experience which is of God, by God, and in God. But complete description breaks down not only because it is an ontological encounter between two beings, but more particularly because it is a union of Divine Being with man, a being of a different order. "Mystical Theology" seeks to communicate something of the nature and significance of this union, but its theological statements and forms of thought are necessarily inadequate since in the final analysis it all has to point to a higher order of things beyond what man can know naturally. Of course, the language is symbolical and cannot be otherwise. John, along with other mystics, uses the courtship and marriage symbol as his principal thought image

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 2, xx-xxii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2, xxi.

to communicate the divine union experience, but its significance lies far beyond the imagery and symbolism and extends to what is really experienced and actually un-expressable.

John's interpretation of Scripture is relevant in this context of mystical theology, for he does not analyze and exegete Biblical passages by asking what they mean in respect to his own soul. This would lead to a purely subjective theology which in the end would not necessarily be mystical at all. John asks of each Scripture what it points to beyond himself in God. In the light of modern hermeneutical methods, his method appears cavalier at times, but he consistently employs a freedom similar to that of the Apostles when they apparently used Old Testament passages to interpret New Testament events without particular attention to historical and linguistic details.<sup>1</sup> Thus John of the Cross can interpret "Anima mea liquefacta est, ut sponsus locutus est" to mean that the speaking of the Bridegroom is equivalent to God's Self-communication to the soul,<sup>2</sup> and, in establishing that the wisdom of men is pure ignorance and unworthy of being known, he quotes Proverbs as saying: "This is the vision that the man who is

---

<sup>1</sup>E. g., Acts 2:16 ff.; 7:45 ff.; et al.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle 26, v; Song of Solomon 5:6.

with God saw and spoke. And being comforted by God's dwelling within him, he said: I am the most foolish of men, and the wisdom of men is not with me."<sup>1</sup> Literally scores of other scriptural passages are cited in this same manner by John, for he does not see the Bible as an end in itself but rather as a symbol pointing beyond its pages to the Reality that is linguistically signified. This is mysticism in the objective sense, for the essence of the Doctor's encounter with God is more than an inner feeling of ecstasy. It is the impact of the Almighty on the soul which points the recipient away from self and beyond subjectivism to the Bridegroom Himself. The result is that the soul rejoices in God and not in personal sentimentalism, and can say of Him:

He is almighty, wise and good; and He is merciful, just, powerful, and loving, etc.; and He is the other infinite attributes and powers of which we have no knowledge. Since He is all of these in His simple being, the soul views distinctly in Him, when He is united with it and deigns to disclose this knowledge, all these powers and grandeurs, that is: omnipotence, wisdom, goodness, and mercy, etc. Since each of these attributes is the very being of God in His one and only suppositum, which is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and since each one is God Himself, Who is infinite light or divine fire, we deduce that the soul, like God, gives forth light and warmth through each of these innumerable attributes.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 26, xiii; Proverbs 30:1-2.

<sup>2</sup>Flame 3, ii.

The content, then, of Mystical Theology is not only "secret and hidden" from discursive reasoning and sensory perception, but it is also "secret and hidden" from man's imagination, for "since God is formless and figureless, the memory walks safely when empty of form and figure . . . and draws closer to God."<sup>1</sup> In fact, the more man leans on imagination, "the farther away it [his soul] moves from God and the more serious is its danger; for in being what He is--unimaginable--God cannot be grasped by the imagination."<sup>2</sup> This fact does not mean that the experience of God cannot be described by thought images and linguistic symbols, for, indeed, this is the only manner in which the experience in God's love and grace can be expressed. As John says:

Who can describe the understanding He gives to loving souls in whom He dwells? And who can express the experience He imparts to them? Who, finally, can explain the desires He gives them? Certainly, no one can! Not even they who receive these communications. As a result these persons let something of their experiences overflow in figures and similes, and from the abundance of their spirit pour out secrets and mysteries rather than rational explanations.

If these similitudes are not read with the simplicity of the spirit of knowledge and love they contain, they will

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3, lii.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

seem to be absurdities rather than reasonable utterances, as will those comparisons of the divine Canticle of Solomon and other books of Sacred Scripture where the Holy Spirit, unable to express the fullness of His meaning in ordinary words, utters mysteries in strange figures and likenesses.<sup>1</sup>

But these in themselves are not to be confused with God, for they point away from their signification to something or Someone greater. Thus, reading John's "Mystical Theology" and analyzing it does not produce the experience of which he testifies. Mystical Theology itself is directional rather than productional. It can point the way, but it is impotent to produce the presence of God in the soul. For this reason it must remain mystical in contrast to discursive theologies which contain suprarational elements, but in the end, are, in varying degrees, but the highest that man can think out about God without necessarily knowing Him ontologically.

Too long, then, has John of the Cross been neglected under a misunderstanding of his mysticism, and too long has he been denied his rightful role as the sixteenth century reformer who remained in the Roman Catholic Church. Fortunately, there is still time to apply the truths of his theology and to witness the revitalizing fruits which always follow real repentance and humble obedience to the Word that John experienced so personally and loved so devotedly.

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle, Prologue.

## II. A Critical Assessment of the Teachings of John of the Cross

In concluding the evaluation of John's empirico-mystical theology, a critical assessment of his teachings for their permanent value in historical Christian thought is in order. Accordingly, then, the reasons for his relative obscurity in the history of Christian doctrine, certain problems involved in his theological distinctives, and the relation of his mystical concepts to the mainstream of Christian teachings are matters which need consideration before completing the present study. These will be noted in summary fashion, and, to avoid repetition, they will be presented without including previously used quotations from John's works.

### The Relative Obscurity of John's Theology

John of the Cross wrote during the period immediately following Luther and Calvin, and he has been declared a Doctor of the Church Universal by Roman Catholicism, and yet both he and his theology are relatively unknown both in popular and academic circles. A few contemplative-minded Anglicans, and several mysticism-oriented Catholics have been his principal disciples, but these, too, have been unsuccessful in liberating his theology from relative

obscurity. Even within his own order of Discalced Carmelites there has been more popularization of the practical foundress, St. Theresa of Avila, than of the mystical theologian, John of the Cross. His teachings passed the crucial test of orthodoxy under the suspicious eyes of his enemies and the constant surveillance of the Holy Office, and his theology presently enjoys the Church's highest approval, but John is rarely referred to by Christian theologians in general, and he is only remotely known by the majority of Christians throughout the world. His works have been translated into English, German, French, Dutch, Portuguese, Latin, and Italian, but even in his own Castilian Spanish he is little read, except as an inspired poet and an incomprehensible mystic.

The basis for this apparent obscurity during the past four centuries merits brief consideration in the present study. There must be something inherently problematical about his theology to bring about the neglect it has received by theologians in particular and the church in general.

Mode of Expression. One problem which deters John's theology from receiving popular appeal is the style of his writings and the literary modes which he uses to communicate the experience of divine-union.

Basic to his theology are the lyrical poems which he committed to writing, and these in themselves are almost unintelligible apart from the extensive commentaries which accompany them. The poems are beautifully composed and represent the best in sixteenth century verse,<sup>1</sup> but they also bear the exegetical difficulties of all mystical poetry, due to their extremely symbolic nature which requires laborious interpretive explanation.

John's theology is limited further by the structural mode in which he presents it. To say the least, it is not the systematic treatment of the Scholastics, nor could it be. Aquinas writes theology from

---

<sup>1</sup>Professor Dámaso Alonso of Madrid, renowned literary critic and outstanding philologist, published on the quatercentenary of John's birth a book entitled La Poesía de San Juan de la Cruz which was awarded the Fasteurath Prize by the Spanish Academy. The study only deals with the literary quality of John's poetic works, and concludes with the following tribute: "St. John of the Cross is Spain's greatest poet. And he has reached this peak, not, like Lope de Vega, by writing whole libraries, nor even by virtue of the normal production of a Garcilaso, a Herrera, a Góngora, or a Quevedo. He has reached it with a body of work of minimum volume . . . each of his compositions being so unlike the rest that each can almost be said to represent a completely distinct type of poetic technique and vision. And that phenomenon is unique in Castilian literature." As cited in E. Allison Peers, St. John of the Cross (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1946), p. 53.



the speculative and rationalistic point of view, while John is describing the supra-rational experience of an empirical encounter with God. Ontological relationships such as John advocates simply do not fit into systematic molds, and this does not make their literary description any less difficult to follow. To John's credit, it must be said that he endeavors to present his doctrine in such a way that even the simplest of persons can comprehend it, but, in reality, his system has remained with the dubious honor of being beyond the understanding of most Christians. His lengthy commentaries on the mystical poems are in the main didactic and even discursive at times. They are filled with repetitions, ambiguities, and redundancies which become tedious to follow and more difficult to organize. In the Spanish texts many of his prosaic sentences are long and labyrinthine and the problem of proper punctuation and correct interpretation are well known.

Kavanaugh notes that in one recent Spanish edition of John's works there was a need to buttress a single sentence with fifty commas, four semicolons, two uses of parentheses, and one inserted dash.<sup>1</sup> Of course, there are other sections of his commentaries where the prose is incisive, clear, and definitive, and the theological and psychological

---

<sup>1</sup>Kavanaugh, op. cit., p. 35.

content is valuable for practical and doctrinal purposes. On the whole, however, it is doubtful that John ever wrote his treatises with the view of publication, and it is still more certain that they are extremely difficult as devotional materials, and even more problematical as textbooks in either speculative or spiritual theology.

Ascetical Nature of His Teachings. Another aspect of John's theology which renders it theologically and practically unpopular is the rigorous ascetical requirements which he espouses. To Ana de Peñalosa he once wrote: "Nothing, nothing, nothing, until one's very flesh and everything else is lost for Christ."<sup>1</sup> For John of the Cross, this is not empty religious idealism, but it is the pole-star of all his theological thought. He does not want even a theology that is not lost for Christ. His greatest embarrassment in life would have been popularity, and his resolute insistence on never stopping, short of absolute deprivation of all sensory, psychological, and religious desires, assured him of an equally absolute immunity from such embarrassment.

In his writings, John takes away from his followers everything that the senses can absorb, the mind can imagine, the memory can recall, and the heart can cherish. He will tolerate nothing less than

---

<sup>1</sup>As quoted in Maritain, op. cit., p. 406.

absolute nakedness in the senses, appetites, and faculties of the heart and soul. No image either external or internal, real or imagined, graven or conceptual can remain even in the remotest corners of one's life if divine union as experienced by John is to be fully realized.

"Satisfaction of heart is not found in the possession of things but in being stripped (la desnudez) of them and in poverty of spirit,"<sup>1</sup> for:

. . . God does not communicate Himself to the soul--nor is this possible--through the disguise of any imaginative vision, likeness, or figure, but mouth to mouth: the pure and naked essence of God (the mouth of God in love) with the pure and naked essence of the soul (the mouth of the soul in the love of God).<sup>2</sup>

Thus it can be affirmed that John's asceticism is more a matter of empirical necessity than the practice of a theological virtue as such. Also, his principal emphasis is upon the asceticism of the spirit rather than upon some artificial externalization of it. John's goal is the fullest experience of God that is possible in this life and he sees no possible concordance between light and darkness, so, of necessity, absolute asceticism of the spirit has to be realized if the light of God is to enter. Accordingly, then, in John's analogy of the window pane, asceticism (spiritual cleansing and nakedness) is

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle I, xiv.

<sup>2</sup>Ascent II, 16, ix.

indispensable if the glass (the soul) is to be fully illumined to the degree that nothing impedes the transparent passage of the life-giving light. No amount of religious deeds or discursive mediation can take place, in John's writings, of self-denial in the mind, heart, and spirit.

In presenting this distinctive emphasis the Mystical Doctor reveals the breadth of his psychological genius<sup>1</sup> by being able to probe to the innermost depths of man's being in search of appetites, desires, imaginations, confidences, and memories which serve to blur, deter, and distort the Light of God as it floods into the soul. These deterrents include not only the physical and metaphysical impurities of the spirit, but John is the most severe when he writes against the religious elements in man's existence that result in pride, possessiveness, self-satisfaction, and unaspiring contentment. This is true even of the desire for supernatural revelations and locutions.

Some spiritual persons . . . convince themselves that their curiosity to know of certain things through supernatural means is good because God sometimes answers these petitions. They think this conduct is good and pleasing to God because He responds to their urgent request. Yet the truth is that, regardless of God's reply, such behavior is neither good nor pleasing to God. Rather He is displeased; not only displeased but frequently angered and deeply offended.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Peers acclaims John "The greatest psychologist in the history of mysticism." Peers, Complete Works, op. cit., p. xxix.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 21, i.

John, by unmasking the human spirit down to its most rudimentary essence, is able to ascertain unholy religious motivations, subtle personalistic desires, and even unconscious spiritual intentions which represent impediments for God's activity in the soul. But this expression of his genius for religious psychiatry results in a laborious literary style and reveals his unequivocal obstinacy in regard to spiritual asceticism. While his diagnostic observations relative to man's inner uncleanness of spirit are true, it is the hard and unpopular truth. It is even the foreboding truth, for, though Christ's teachings regarding the source of man's spiritual problems is substantially the same as that of John, the Saviour was content to leave individual conviction in this matter to the Paraclete. John of the Cross apparently felt divine leadership in being the instrument of the Paraclete's work in this respect. The result is that though he makes a distinctive contribution to religious psychology, his extremes in applying this to the sins of the spirit have become a significant factor in his relative obscurity as a theologian. Only a very few souls would be willing to go to the ascetical depths which John demands of the spirit, and, consequently, his studies have not received wide popular or clerical acclaim.

### Doctrinal Problems in John's Theology

Mystical theology, by its very nature, borders on certain serious problems of doctrinal significance. John's writings were under suspicion from their very inception due to the strong personal opposition to him within the Discalced reform. Nothing would have pleased his ecclesiastical opponents more than to have had him punished by an Inquisition tribunal and his works banned from publication. To fully appreciate the perilous and suspicious atmosphere in which John lived, one has but to recall that he produced his literary works in the years immediately following the Council of Trent when orthodoxy was defended on every hand in Spain and when every means at the disposal of Rome was being used to purge out Reformation influences as well as those of the illuminati. Even as popular a religious leader as Loyola was formally investigated (1527), and Luis de León, the esteemed professor of Theology at Salamanca, remained incarcerated four years due to the influence within the Holy Office of his opponents. Rumors, suspicions, and investigations infiltrated all of Spain's religious existence, and John's writings were studied, analyzed, and even stolen on occasions in attempts to find heretical teachings in them. The effects of this on his literary production were both good and bad. The

positive effect is seen in the intentional revisions he made in his writings to include certain clarifications regarding their doctrinal orthodoxy. This is especially apparent where he deals with the matters of divine illumination and deification. The negative effect of the inquisition on his writings resulted in the destruction of certain minor literary works which John felt would be misconstrued and misinterpreted by his enemies. It is regrettable that posterity is deprived of these from his pen, but the vindication of his major treatises which survived onslaughts within his Order and without it, is cause for gratitude.

Illuminism. The principal charge brought against John's theology by his enemies was the heresy of illuminism. The proponents of this doctrine were called the "alumbrados" in Spain because they claimed to be illumined (alumbrado) by a directly communicated "light" from higher sources than the church and Scriptures. This heresy generally took two forms--(1) humanistic illumination, which exalted man's intelligence above ecclesiastical piety as the means for receiving religious truth, and (2) the supernaturalist form, which placed spiritually received communications on a par with church and Biblical tradition. John is one of the most severe critics of the first of these ideas, and he intentionally filled his writings with admonitions against the second one. However, his emphasis on God as "Eternal Light" and

"Infinite Voice," and his continual stress on knowing God directly through contemplation, led his opponents to accuse him of teaching illuminism. To his credit his writings were never officially condemned by the Inquisition commissions and, in the present context, it is useless to re-open the charge of illuminism, since his innocence before the Holy Office was proven and since the presentation of his doctrine in the previous sections of this study amply indicate the Mystical Doctor's abhorrence of the major tenets of illuminism. Furthermore, his prolific use of the Bible and his repeated insistence on subjection to Church authority and tradition denote his complete disassociation from this heretical fad of the sixteenth century.

Deification and Absorptionism. The problems of deification and absorptionism also require investigation with regards to John's theology, for he clearly uses terminology and concepts that leave his writings open to criticism on these issues. His language at times is extravagant to the point of being shocking for the ordinary Western consciousness. He can say: "Souls possess the same goods by participation that the Son possesses by nature. As a result, they are truly gods by participation, equals and companions of God."<sup>1</sup> Statements

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 39, vi (author's underlining). The word compañero (companion) in Spanish is a term denoting intimacy based on equality and likeness.



such as this one and others similar to it (which have been included in the study on the ontological aspects of divine union) raise serious questions about John's faithfulness to the Biblical teachings on man's retention of his personal individuality.

The fact that John emphatically teaches the permanence of human nature and its eternal distinctiveness from the divine has already been noted in this study, and it has been shown, too, that his doctrine of deification must be appraised within the context of his teachings on the believer's essential adoption by God. John's linguistic extravagance is possibly attributable to his personal and theological rootage into Eastern thought. Spain in John's day was impregnated with Moorish, Semetic, Teutonic, and Latin modes of thought, and, besides this, the Carmelite movement of which John was a part reached deep into an Eastern theological heritage. Dios in Spanish was more akin phonetically to the rigid Deus of Latin, but in the Carmelite setting it had a theological and historical link to the more fluid Θεός of Eastern thought. Thus Origen could say: "In another sense God is said to be an immortal, rational, moral Being. In this sense every gentle (ἰσοτεία) soul is God."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>As quoted by Harnack in William Ralph Inge, Christian Mysticism (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1925), p. 357.

Of course, the fact that deification was taught in the Greek mystery religions and was a more flexible idea among Eastern theologies does not excuse John's use of Dios in describing the transformed status of man through union with God. But this historical connection does help to interpret John's writings as not being a form of essentialization, but it is his way of expressing the fullness of the adoptive relationship which God grants to man by participation in His divine nature.

John even uses the Eastern idea of the Incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ as being the means of our sonship, the abolition of death, and man's absorption into the new life of Christ. It is in this context that he quotes the Apostle Paul as saying: "death is swallowed up in victory," and "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me."<sup>1</sup> But here again, John of the Cross is not teaching a Christian doctrine of absorptionism whereby man loses his essential nature in the vastness of the divine. He is indicating, instead, that man's intellectual and volitional faculties become absorbed in the Divine Mind and Will, respectively. The child of God thinks God's thoughts through the mode of his own creatureliness and he desires God's will in the same manner.

---

<sup>1</sup>Flame 2, xxxiv (I Cor. 15:54 and Galatians 2:20).

His individuality as a person is not lost in God, nor is his essentially human nature substituted by the divine, nor is it even degraded in favor of the divine. Unitive adoption as John teaches it does not cancel out or absolve man's distinctive existence as a separate and substantially different being from the Creator.

What distinguishes John's doctrine in respect to man's ontological relation with God is his concept of the believer's participation in the Divine essence and operations by means of a miraculous infusion of God's Love, Light, and Life. Thus the Eternal Son is never deprived of His unique relation to the Father as filius naturalis Dei, but the creaturely child who is reborn by the Spirit is especially and peculiarly related to the Father in that he becomes filius adoptivus. He does not devolve into a depersonalized state, nor does he become what he cannot be. In a model sense, he becomes through adoptive and participatory union, what Christ became in the hypostatic union. Just as the Son did not lose his deity by becoming hypostatically united with man, so the believer does not lose his humanity by becoming cognitively, volitionally, and ontologically united with God by divine infusion and participation. This is a work of God which John calls the process of transformación, which is effected through divine grace as the miracle by which God accommodates human nature in order that the divine might cohabit with it.

In this manner, John avoids the problem of deification by essentialization on the one hand and by absorption on the other. That his terminology to describe the essential effects of God's nature upon man's is extreme, there is no argument. A characteristic of his entire theology is to press language to its farthest limits in order to describe the results of God's ontological union with man.

Ontologism. Still another problem in John's teachings is the danger of ontologism. This is closely related to the problems of illuminism and deification, but it is distinct from them also.

There are many elements in John's theology that open the way for the charge of ontologism. They are: (1) his insistence on the substantial union of man and God through creation, (2) his advocacy of intuitional faith as the mode for receiving God's self-revelation, and (3) his teaching that the unitive experience with God is both a cognitive and volitional union that is ontological in source and content.

Ontologism founds its doctrine on the basic axiom that man has being ( ὅν ὅντος ) as the object of his intellect and this being is the Divine Essence of the universe. No distinction is made between divine apprehension acquired by natural man and that acquired by the believer through grace and consequently, no doctrine of grace

is included in its system. Also, ontologism makes ideas the real things of life, and thereby leaves no room for a distinction between God and his creatures.

The three general similarities between the theology of John and ontologism are noted above, and even the language of the ontologists resembles the phraseology used by the Mystical Doctor in the Canticle and Living Flame. Thus, Malebranche, the leading French ontologist can say:

Only He [God] can throw light upon the [human] spirit by His own substance . . . it is He who rules over our spirit, according to St. Augustine, without the mediation of any creature. . . . One cannot conceive that the infinite can be represented by anything created . . . it must be said that one knows God through Himself, although the knowledge one has of Him in this life is very imperfect.<sup>1</sup>

While it cannot be denied that there is both a semantic and axiomatic resemblance between some of John's teachings and those of ontologism, the likeness ends when the two systems are analyzed in depth. Fundamentally they are contradictory.

While it is true that John is at one with ontologism in teaching the ontological nature of divine knowledge he in no wise identifies this with nature nor does he teach that it is a natural experience for man

---

<sup>1</sup>D. Cleary, "Ontologism," New Catholic Encyclopedia, op.cit., X, 702.

apart from divine grace. It is also true that John recognizes the intuitive element in man's cognition of God, but he positively denies that this is ever an activity of man or that, in itself, it can ever make God, or any aspect of God's Being, known to man. Finally, it is also a fact that John teaches a substantial presence of God in every soul by creation, but he emphatically affirms, too, that man's knowledge of God in His Being is a transformation which takes place out of God's sovereign will and grace, and not as the result of a divine existence in man's intellect.

One of the major problems of ontologism is that it does not take into account man's sin and the distorting effects of this on his intellect and his ability to know God ontologically. It fails also to distinguish between the natural light of reason and the supernatural light of divine transcendence. Furthermore, its emphasis on ideas as the basal element of existence is founded on the false assumption that being can be identified with thought. John of the Cross does not begin with such an a priori assumption, but he claims an experience of God which is essentially ontological and which results in the reception of divine light that "transcends every natural light and infinitely exceeds all human understanding."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 3, i.

The light of ontologism is the light of ordinary human reason, but the light of which John speaks is the "brighter light" which eclipses and suppresses all lesser lights.<sup>1</sup> Ontologism makes appeal to Plato and Augustine in their analogy that God is to the mind what the sun is to the things visible to the eye, but John of the Cross identifies the light of the mind with that of the stars which is not seen when the pure light of the sun is shining. John also distinguishes between the reflected light of the sun which makes things visible and the direct energy of the sun which gives things life.

In practice, the two concepts of "light" are antithetical.

Ontologism takes man's natural light and deifies it, whereas John seeks to divest man of all confidence in his own intellect in order to receive the purer ontological light of God.<sup>2</sup> That this light is always in the soul is certain, but its revelation does not come through the exercise of reason, but by the denial of self and the activity of divine grace. This is John's conclusion after discussing the soul's passive reception of God's "loving knowledge."

The manifest conclusion is that, when a person has finished purifying and voiding himself of all forms and

---

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 14, ix.

apprehensible images, he will abide in this pure and simple light, and be perfectly transformed into it. This light is never lacking to the soul, but because of creature forms and veils weighing upon and covering it, the light is never infused. If a person will eliminate these impediments and veils, and live in pure nakedness and poverty of spirit, as we shall explain later, his soul in its simplicity and purity will then be immediately transformed into simple and pure Wisdom, the Son of God. As soon as natural things are driven out of the enamored soul, the divine are naturally and supernaturally infused, since there can be no void in nature.<sup>1</sup>

In ontologism the knowledge of God is immediate and requires no purgation or moral transformation, but in John's writings, the light is mediated contuitively through "the Word" by the Holy Spirit,<sup>2</sup> and

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 15, iv.

<sup>2</sup>Canticle 37, viii, et al. The term contuition is used in this context to indicate the role of the Word and Spirit as mediators of the Light or Being of God as over against the direct intuitional approach of ontologism where the epistemological relation is immediate. The word is taken from Mascall who uses it to distinguish between the heretical idea of an immediate intuition of God and the mediated intuition of God which is the Christian doctrine of the Logos and Paraclete. E. L. Mascall, Words and Images (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), p. 85. H. P. Owen also uses it in his discussion of "Intuition." H. P. Owen, The Christian Knowledge of God (London: Athlone Press, 1969), pp. 123 ff.



not only illumines but also darkens, humbles, and empties the soul of its impurities.

. . . even though this happy night darkens the spirit, it does so only to impart light concerning all things; and even though it humbles a person and reveals his miseries, it does so only to exalt him; and though it impoverishes and empties him of all possessions and natural affection, it does so only that he may reach out divinely to the enjoyment of all earthly and heavenly things, with a general freedom of spirit in them all.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the ontologist begins with human deification due to man's possession of an intellect and his intuitive grasp of Being which he defines as God, but John requires a supernatural transformation in man before he is able to partake of the divine essence. He calls this an illumination which renews and divinizes the whole of man's soul:

This renovation is: an illumination of the human intellect with supernatural light so that it becomes divine, united with the divine; an informing of the will with love of God so that it is no longer less than divine and loves in no other way than divinely, united and made one with the divine will and love; and also a divine conversion and change of the memory, the affections, and the appetites, according to God. And thus this soul will be a soul of heaven, heavenly and more divine than human.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Night II, 9, i.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 13, xi.

If asked to define their concept of illumination, ontologism would affirm its confidence in human reason to arrive at the fullness of divine Light as God's Being. John of the Cross, on the other hand, would state unequivocally that the illumination is the presence of the Son of God,<sup>1</sup> and he contrasts it repeatedly with the natural light of reason which, comparatively speaking, is "foolishness before God."<sup>2</sup> Thus he can speak of the complete transformation in man's intellect which the divine light causes in the soul:

The intellect, which before this union understood naturally by the vigor of its natural light, by means of the natural senses, is now moved and informed by another higher principle of supernatural divine light, and the senses are bypassed. Accordingly, the intellect becomes divine, because through its union with God's intellect both become one.<sup>3</sup>

Ontologism begins by identifying light (ideas or knowledge) as God (Being) and makes It the object of the soul, but John inverts this order and defines God as light and posits Him as the goal of the soul:

God is the light and the object of the soul, and when this light does not illumine it, the soul dwells in obscurity even though it may have very excellent vision. When it is in sin or occupies its appetites with other things, then it is blind. And even though God's light may shine upon it, it does not

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 10, viii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 26, xiii.

<sup>3</sup>Flame 2, xxxiv.

see its obscureness, which is its ignorance, because it is blind. Before God illumined it by means of this transformation, it was in obscurity and ignorant of so many of God's goods. . . .

. . . . .  
 Until the Lord said, fiat lux, darkness was over the face of the abyss of the caverns of the soul's feeling. The more unfathomable and deep-caverned is the feeling, the more profound are its chasms and its darkneses, regarding the supernatural, when God Who is its light does not illumine it.

. . . . .  
 The light of grace which God has previously accorded this soul . . . called to another abyss of grace, which is this divine transformation of the soul in God. In this transformation the eye of the soul's feeling is so illumined and agreeable to God that we can say God's light and that of the soul are one, since the natural light of the soul is united with the supernatural light of God, so that only the supernatural light is shining--just as the light God created was united to the light of the sun, and now only the sun shines even though the other light is not lacking.<sup>1</sup>

The contrast, then, between ontologism and John's theology is extreme, and ultimately it is the distinction between the two lights: natural and supernatural. John does not deny the existence of the natural light, but he categorically denies its capacity to reveal God as He is in His Being. He also is aware of the role of intuition in man's experience of union with God, but it is not a natural ability of man in John's teachings. It is only the means whereby God infuses faith directly into the receptive soul by the hearing of the Word and the work of the Spirit. Finally, while the Mystical Doctor agrees that

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3, lxx-lxxi.

Being is the ultimate goal in man's empirical cognition of things, he is explicit in distinguishing between being as pure intellectual attainment and being as the experience of the "loving knowledge" which includes not only the wisdom of God but also His relational essence within the Trinity.

### Relation of John's Teaching to Biblical Theology

It remains now to hold up the main tenets of John's theology before the light of Biblical revelation to ascertain whether or not his teachings are indeed scripturally based, or, if in some instances, he was more influenced by doctrinal concepts which are not directly of scriptural origin. This part of the present study cannot be exhaustive in any sense, due to the voluminous nature of John's writings, but the distinctive theological emphases of his treatises can be noted in summary form.

The Doctrine of God. The doctrine of God in the Saint's teachings is outstanding, especially for the prominence which he gives to God's triune nature. One of the strengths of his entire theological system is his awareness of the operational distinctions and essential oneness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Basically John's teaching in this respect reveals an indebtedness to Augustine, but he also goes

beyond him in applying the trinitarian truths to the unitive experience in its dependence upon God as Love, Light, and Life in their respective relations to man's will, intellect, and memory. In all of his discussion of the soul's union with God, John is careful to indicate that it is a trinitarian experience which is mediated through the Logos and applied by the Spirit.

There are two basic problems in John's doctrine of God. One of these is seen in his concept of God's grace which, in many respects, is inadequate due to the fact that he does not sufficiently identify it with the Person and work of Christ as it is taught in the New Testament in general, and by the Apostle Paul in particular. Christology in his system is reserved primarily for the doctrine of divine union by the Spirit, and this reaches the proportions of a superior experience to that which God gives by sacramental grace. The problem here is due primarily to John's deficient concept of the nature of grace, for he can go so far as to define three distinct modes of the divine presence in the soul:

The first is His presence by essence. In this way He is present not only in the holiest souls, but also in sinners and in all other creatures. For with this presence He gives them life and being. Should this essential presence be lacking to them, they would all be annihilated. Thus this presence is never wanting to the soul.

The second is His presence by grace, in which He abides in the soul, pleased and satisfied with it. Not all have this presence of God; those who fall into mortal sin lose it. The soul cannot know naturally if it has this presence.

The third is His presence by spiritual affection, for God usually grants His spiritual presence to devout souls in many ways, by which He refreshes, delights, and gladdens them.<sup>1</sup>

John is victim in this instance of his theological training under the idea of grace in Medieval Catholicism. In this system grace had become a "means" whereby an almost quasi-quantitative potency was communicated in the sacraments which required some type of individual or institutional administration. In orthodox Spain during the sixteenth century this "means" was almost universally applied through the administration of baptism by the institutional representatives of the Church. It was also "dispensed" through the Eucharist<sup>2</sup> and the other sacraments, and John's thinking was inextricably bound up in this erroneous concept of charis. Thus he can speak of the historical espousal made (se hizo) on the cross between God and man, and the immediate accomplishment (se hace) of this espousal "when God gives the first grace which is bestowed (se hace) on each one at baptism."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 11, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Night I, 6, v.

<sup>3</sup>Canticle 23, vi.

It would be a misinterpretation of John's theology to press the distinction between God's presence in the soul through "grace" and that which comes by "spiritual affection." Actually, most of his teachings indicate that the divine presence which results from the divine union of love is an extension of God's presence by grace and a fulfillment of it. But the fact remains that John's problem is to interpret properly his unitive experience of God's love. This was made more difficult because of his previous commitment to the current institutional and administrative mode of thinking about divine grace. Thus he lapses many times into a confusion of God's love with what the New Testament describes as growth in grace. Love becomes more than the essence of God's nature in John's theology, for he makes it assume the functions of divine grace in the contemplative process of sanctification and transformation.

Practically speaking, then, John's inadequate concept of divine grace goes back to his theological training where the medieval concept of charis dominated the theological classrooms in Spain and elsewhere. It would have been heretical for him to have broken with this idea of grace, so the Mystical Doctor appears to have circumvented the problem by a doctrine of divine love which effects the work of grace in the soul.

Theologically speaking the problem is deeper, however. The root of the matter is that John's doctrine of grace is not sufficiently

grounded in Christology. He only relates gracia to Christ on two occasions and even these are token references to the Christological relationship rather than being fundamental to his theology. Thus in speaking of the many things which men and angels tell him of Christ, John mentions the Son's "mercy and grace" which were "manifested both in the works of the Incarnation and the truths of faith."<sup>1</sup> This statement appears on the surface to reveal a profound insight into the incarnational aspects of divine grace, but the significance of it is lessened by the next line where John says: "And they (the angels and men) forever tell more, because the more they desire to tell, the more of Your (Christ's) graces they are able to reveal." The plural form in this context testifies to John's lack of Biblical background for his doctrine of grace since neither the Hebrew form chen in the Old Testament nor the New Testament word charis are used plurally in the Scriptures. Furthermore, though John apparently relates grace to the incarnation in this passage and in the poem referring to John 1:14,<sup>2</sup> it is really not this at all. It is, instead, a reference to Christ's works (obras) during His earthly existence rather than an outgrowth of His

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 7, vii.

<sup>2</sup>Poem: Romances--First Romance: On the Gospel "In Principio erat Verbum," Regarding the Most Blessed Trinity, i-xi.



Person as Son of God and Son of Man. John is teaching that godly men and angels tell the soul of the things Christ did while He was in His incarnational sojourn here on earth. This is borne out further by the poetic line from the Canticle which he is expounding in this case. It says:

All who are free to wander

Tell me a thousand graces about Thee.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is not primarily about grace as it is rooted in the Person and work of Christ that John is speaking, but it is about the Son's gracious works that He did as He lived in human flesh.

The second instance where John relates divine grace to the Son is a more oblique reference in the Living Flame. In this passage he exegetes the phrase: "O gentle hand! O delicate touch," and relates "the hand" in this experience to "the merciful and omnipotent Father" and "the touch" to "the Word."<sup>2</sup> In the soul's adoration of God for this sublime experience it says: "You granted this with the liberality of Your generous grace which You used in contacting me with the touch of the splendor of your glory and the figure of Your substance which is Your only begotten Son. . . ."<sup>3</sup> The adoration in this passage is

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 7, vii.

<sup>2</sup>Flame 2, xvi f.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

directed to the Father ("O Hand") and thus it is His "generous grace" which effects the Son's "touch" on the soul. John, of course, would not draw a sharp distinction between grace as a gift of God; and grace as a Christological operation, but the fact that he does not directly root the idea of grace into the Person and work of Christ is the principal reason that his concept of divine grace is deficient in the affectional stages of union with God.

A second weakness in John's doctrine of God is his lack of emphasis upon the life and active obedience of Christ during His human existence on earth and the positive effects of the Spirit's work in redemption because of this. The references to the death and passive obedience of the Son are numerous in John's works, but the positive functions of Christ's humanity are omitted almost entirely. Only one example can be cited, due to the limitations of space, but in the Ascent the Mystical Doctor states that in the crucifixion, Christ "died spiritually to the sensitive part.

. . . at the moment of His death He was certainly annihilated in His soul, without any consolation or relief, since the Father left Him that way in innermost aridity in the lower part. He was thereby compelled to cry out: My God, My God, why have You forsaken me? [Mt. 27:46] This was the most extreme abandonment, sensitively, that He had suffered in His life. . . . The Lord achieved this, as I say, at the moment in which He was most annihilated in all things: in His reputation before men, since in beholding

Him die they mocked Him instead of esteeming Him; in His human nature, by dying; and in spiritual help and consolation from His Father, for He was forsaken by His Father at that time so as to pay the debt fully and bring man to union with God.<sup>1</sup>

While it may be contended that John's Christology is to be taken for granted, and that he is not teaching theology as such but is only describing the doctrine of divine union, the lack of emphasis on Christ's active obedience is harmful to all his teachings. One patent example of this is seen in his negative approach to the faculties of the soul. He leaves no room for any active obedience of the will, memory, and intellect, but consigns them the sole responsibility of submission to complete purgation and passivity. In actual fact, however, John's intellect, memory, and will were very active in the production of his literary works, and it is doubtful that any theological or literary critic today would accuse the Mystical Doctor of sinful activity while he was using his mind in this manner. His insistence upon the absolute futility of man's agent intellect as a means to know God is Biblically grounded and theologically accurate. Furthermore, his warnings against the tendency to allow a priori ideas and existing rationalistic thought patterns to formalize and otherwise distort the knowledge of God which is

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent 7, xi.

given by Himself as Agent is a needed corrective in religious epistemology. But John's theology will be misunderstood and misinterpreted because he fails to show the distinctive roles of the intellect in regard to knowing God ontologically and the communication of this knowledge to others.

It must be recognized, of course, that the kind of divine knowledge about which John writes is basically uncommunicable through language just as the knowledge of any being cannot be reduced to thought. This is John's principal reason for canceling out man's intellect as a possible means for knowing God ontologically. But the Spirit's work in the soul is more than the negative activity of cleansing, purging, and emptying. It is also transforming, perfecting, and elevating the present faculties of the soul for a greater appreciation of the experience with God. John's oft repeated analogy of the window pane is instructive as far as it goes, but what the Mystical Doctor is unable to illustrate through this figure is the dynamic work of the Spirit in re-creating and re-capacitating the intellect and will. Thus these faculties are able not only to apprehend the knowledge of God, but also to make it possible to point back accurately to the experience without an absolute distortion. The Spirit not only makes the words of this communication transparent, but He also makes them dynamic in their effect.

This, of course, is best illustrated by the Person and work of Christ, for during the thirty-three years of His earthly existence, He not only remained passively obedient unto death, but he was actively obedient in life and equally dependent on the Spirit for both expressions of loyalty to the Father's will. In the case of man's reception of the Word, or the Being of God, he can only be the receiver in passive submission. But in sharing this Word with others, man must be both passively and actively transparent and his language can only be directional. But in pointing away from himself to the Word, man fulfills a rational function which John himself ably demonstrates by his writings, but which he fails to clarify in his doctrinal teachings. Thus he can employ such terms as the hypostatic union,<sup>1</sup> the Beatific vision,<sup>2</sup> the Holy Trinity,<sup>3</sup> Purgatory,<sup>4</sup> deiform,<sup>5</sup> and other theological terms which are of a technical nature, and whose origin is derived secondarily from Scriptures rather than being direct citations. Would a novice in Biblical interpretation use these terms to point men to his own empirical

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 37, iii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 39, i, et al.

<sup>3</sup>Ascent II, 27, i, et al.

<sup>4</sup>Flame I, xxiv, et al.

<sup>5</sup>Canticle 39, iv.

knowledge of God acquired intuitively through faith? Of course, he would not, because he could not, and the history of theology has benefited greatly because John of the Cross could communicate some idea of his experience of God in relation to the conceptual knowledge which man's intellect has apprehended under the impact of the Spirit's activity through active obedience to the Word.

The Doctrine of Divine Union. As the final section in the present evaluation of John's theology, it now remains to analyze John's doctrine of divine union as a Biblically grounded teaching and as a normative experience for all Christians.

It has been indicated previously in this study that certain elements of the divine union doctrine are comparable to teachings of Scripture. For example, Jesus speaks of the disciples' union with Him through the vine and branches analogy,<sup>1</sup> and Paul discusses the believer's oneness with Christ as a member of His Body,<sup>2</sup> but in point of fact, John uses neither of the scriptural figures to illustrate divine union, though his use of the Bible is extensive in each of the major treatises. Furthermore, in support of one of his most basic doctrines--the

---

<sup>1</sup>John 15:1-7.

<sup>2</sup>I Corinthians 12:1-13; Ephesians 4:15 f.

substantial presence of God permanently in the soul--he cites what he believed to be an Augustinian source, rather than the Scriptures: "I did not find you without, Lord, because I wrongly sought you without, who were within."<sup>1</sup> This method whereby he supports his fundamental premises with quotations from "the philosophers" or, more particularly, from Aristotle or St. Thomas, is significant in John's theology, for some of the most basic ideas in his epistemology are not Biblical in origin, but are taken from Reason. Examples of these quotations are: "the divine infusion of love,"<sup>2</sup> "knowledge arises in the soul from both the faculty and the object at hand,"<sup>3</sup> "the passive or possible intellect,"<sup>4</sup> "all means must be proportionate to their end,"<sup>5</sup> and, "whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver."<sup>6</sup> These axioms are not incidental to John's theology. They are integral to his system, and for one who advocated the use of Scripture as the inspired

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle I, vi. Cf. Pseudo-Augustine, Soliloquiorum animae ad Deum liber unus, c. 30: PL 40, 888.

<sup>2</sup>Night II, 17, ii.

<sup>3</sup>Ascent II, 3, ii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 32, iv; Canticle 14-15, xiv.

<sup>5</sup>Ascent II, 8, ii.

<sup>6</sup>Night II, 16, iv.

authority in truth, and for one who teaches against the use of discursive reasoning as a means for knowing God, it is apparent that John did not rule out the authority of tradition, nor the weight of reason in undergirding his theological doctrines. In reality, an analysis of the specific Scriptures used to elucidate the divine union experience indicates that John did not investigate the Biblical bases for union with God first, and then experienced the truth of these passages. What is more probable is that through his rigorous habit of empirical contemplation, John experienced a deep awareness of God which he later sought to buttress with greater scriptural and traditional authority. It is extremely doubtful, however, that an exegesis of the Bible with special reference to man's substantial union with God as Creator, his union with God through baptismal grace, and, his union with God through love, would produce the kind of theology which John proposes. His teachings are especially helpful, however, in the emphasis he gives to the non-scriptural extremes of mysticism (visions, locutions, revelations, etc.) for he explicitly condemns these with excellent illustrations from the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

The question can be posed, then, about the essential nature of divine union in John's writings. If it is not primarily a doctrine exegeted

---

<sup>1</sup>Ascent II, 19, xxxii.



from the Scriptures, what kind of an experience is it? The answer to this is that John's unique awareness of God is a combination of many theological doctrines, some of which are expounded by him to an extreme which is beyond the normative experience of most Christian believers.

His teaching regarding the progressive spiritual transformation in the soul is similar to the Biblical concepts of regeneration and daily renewal of God's children in the Spirit. His doctrines of purgation and illumination are comparable to the Pauline idea of sanctification and growth in Christ. John's emphasis upon the divine infusement of faith, hope, and love is a part of pneumatology in most theologies, and the courtship and marriage figure which he uses describes the struggles, anxieties, and joys which take place in the experience of repentance and faith. His eschatology is well within the bounds of historical orthodoxy among Roman Catholics, and his discussion of the Trinity is one of the most complete in Christian mysticism.

He is extreme, however, in his presentation of the ontological extent of divine union while the soul is still embodied. To use the terms: "deiforme," "gods," "made divine," and "deified" with respect to man's present creaturely existence is to exaggerate the Biblical idea of man's participation in the divine nature beyond the limits imposed by the

Biblical writers. Paul's doctrine of oneness with Christ approximates many of the ideas in John's divine union teachings, but the Apostle never lapses into any type of deification of man's faculties or substance. The New Testament emphasis is modeled more closely after the hypostatic union of Christ in which the divine Person remains fully divine without any of His divine faculties or essence becoming humanized. It is a union not of transformation of the divine into the human, but a taking up of the human into the divine. Christ's analogy of the Vine and branches and Paul's figure of a body denote a type of union with God whereby man's humanity is neither lost nor transformed into something divine, but, instead, is sanctified and perfected to receive the divine nature without becoming any less human. Man's intellectual and volitional faculties are not deified so that they become divine faculties, but they are sanctified and perfected in their truly human essence to such a degree that they are able to be instrumental for performing God's will. This concept of participation in God's nature is less radical than that proposed by John of the Cross, and it more closely defines the empirical experience of most Christians. When John of the Cross describes the soul as becoming "equal with God" and "more divine than human" through union with God, he not only lapses into a form of docetism which reveals a Christological deficiency in his theology,

but he also teaches an experience which goes beyond the religious experience of ordinary Christian believers.<sup>1</sup>

Is divine union as John teaches it the normative relation that all believers should have? The answer to this is negative, for the Mystical Doctor goes beyond even the high standards of the New Testament in describing man's relationship to God. To be "in Christ" or to have "Christ in me" simply does not mean that man's goal in life is the deification of any aspect of his human existence. To be an adopted son of God does not make man a god, since adoption, even when it is conceived as an infusement by God, is not meant to de-humanize or even to deify. Adoptive infusement is a giving of nature and possessions, but it is never taught in the Bible as a process whereby man becomes more divine than human. Man can never say that he is divine in the mode or to the degree that Jesus is human. God allows man to partake of His divine nature, but He does not deprive him, by so doing, of any of his creaturely functions, operations, or essence. The most significant effect of man's participation in God's nature is that it makes man more truly human in the likeness of the humanity of Christ.

---

<sup>1</sup>Canticle 39, vi, and Night II, 13, xi.

Is the theology of John of the Cross a worthwhile contribution to historical theology in general and to mystical theology in particular? The reply in this case is affirmative. His system is a wholesome corrective to many of the more radical extremes found in many mystical theologies within the Christian religion, and his own theology, with its incisive distinction between discursive reasoning and mystical or empirical theology, makes an outstanding contribution to religious epistemology. His insistence on a knowledge of God in which God Himself is both the Sovereign Agent and the Transforming Content is his most cardinal doctrine. What Aquinas is to the discursive theology of his day, John of the Cross is to empirical (or mystical) theology. There can be no doubt that he experienced an awareness of God's Being in his life that few persons have ever known.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Note: The following Bibliography attempts to include as complete a list as possible of books and other materials dealing with John of the Cross or some related aspect of his theology. An asterisk has been placed by those works which were specifically consulted for this present work.)

### I. PRIMARY SOURCES OF JOHN'S WORKS

#### 1. Editions of Complete Works

##### (1.) Spanish

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. Obras Espirituales Que Encaminan Una Alma a la Perfecta Unión con Dios. Barcelona: Sebastián de Cormellas, 1619.

\_\_\_\_\_. Obras del Venerable Padre Fray Ivan de la Cruz. Madrid: Bernardo de Villa-Diego, 1672.

\_\_\_\_\_. Obras Espirituales Que Encaminan un Alma a la más Perfecta Unión con Dios en Transformación de Amor. Barcelona: Vicenta Suria, 1693.

\_\_\_\_\_. Obras del Beato Padre Fray Juan de la Cruz. Madrid: Julián de Paredes, 1694. 2 vols.

\_\_\_\_\_. Obras Espirituales Que Encaminan a Una Alma a la más Perfecta Unión con Dios en Transformación de Amor. Sevilla: Francisco de Leesdael, 1703.

\_\_\_\_\_. Obras Espirituales; Que Encaminan a Una Alma; a la más Perfecta Unión con Dios, en Transformación de Amor. Impresión décimatercia. Pamplona: Pasqual Ibáñez, 1774.

\_\_\_\_\_. Obras Espirituales Que Encaminan a Una Alma a la más Perfection Unión con Dios en Transformación de Amor. Nueva Edición. Madrid: Compañía de Impresores y Libreros del Reino, 1872. 2 vols.

- \_\_\_\_\_. Obras Espirituales. Barcelona: Viuda e Hijos de J. Subirana, 1883.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Obras del Místico Doctor San Juan de la Cruz. Edición Crítica. Toledo: Viuda e Hijos de J. Pelaez, 1912-1914. 3 vols.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_. Obras de San Juan de la Cruz, ed. Gerardo de San Juan de la Cruz, C. D. Toledo: 1912-14. 3 vols.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_. Obras de San Juan de la Cruz, Doctor de la Iglesia. Edición crítica. ed. Silverio de Santa Teresa, C. D. Burgos: Tipografía "El Monte Carmelo," 1929-31. 5 vols.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_. Obras de San Juan de la Cruz. ed. P. Silverio de Santa Teresa. Tercera edición. Burgos: Tipografía de "El Monte Carmelo," 1943.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_. Vida y Obras de San Juan de la Cruz, Doctor de la Iglesia Universal. Biografía inédita del santo por el R. P. Crisógono de Jesús, O. C. D. Revisión del texto y notas por el R. P. Lucinio del SS. Sacramento, O. C. D. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1946.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Obras de San Juan de la Cruz, Doctor de la Iglesia. Quinta edición. Madrid: Apostolado de la Prensa, 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Vida y Obras de San Juan de la Cruz, Doctor de la Iglesia Universal. Biografía por el R. P. Crisógono de Jesús. Revisión del texto, notas e índices del R. P. Lucinio del SS. Sacramento, O. C. D. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1950.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Obras Completas. ed. P. José Vicente de la Eucaristía. Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 1957.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_. Obras Completas. Séptima edición. Madrid: Editorial Apostolado de la Prensa, S. A., 1958.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_. Obras Completas. Texto Crítico-Popular. ed. P. Simeón de la Sagrada Familia, O. C. D. Burgos: "El Monte Carmelo," 1959.

\*           . Vida y Obras de San Juan de la Cruz, Doctor de la Iglesia Universal. Biografía por el R. P. Crisogono de Jesus. Revisión del texto y notas críticas por el R. P. Matías del Niño Jesus, O. C. D. Cuarta edición. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1960.

\*           . Vida y Obras de San Juan de la Cruz. Biografía por Crisogono de Jesus. ed. Matías del Niño Jesus, O. C. D. Quinta edición. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1964.

(2.) French

Juan de la Cruz. Les Oeuvres Spirituelles du Bien-Heureux Jean de la Croix. Traduction nouvelle par le Père Jean Maillard, C. J. Paris: Louis Guerin, 1694.

          . Oeuvres Spirituelles. Avignon: Chez Ve. Fischer-Joly, 1834.

          . Oeuvres très-complètes de Sainte Thérèse . . . de S. Pierre d'Alcantara, de S. Jean de la Croix, et du Bienheureux Jean d'Avila. Paris: M. l'abbé Migne, 1840-1845.

          . Les Oeuvres Spirituelles de Saint Jean de la Croix. Translated by P. Maillard de la Compagnie de Jésus. Paris: Regis Ruffet, 1864.

          . Vie et Oeuvres Spirituelles. Paris: B. Oudin, 1892-4, 3a. ed.

          . Oeuvres Spirituelles. Chan. H. Hoornaert, ed. 1st ed. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1915-1918. 3 vols.

          . Oeuvres Spirituelles. Traduction nouvelle sur le texte de l'édition critique espagnole de P. Gerard de Saint Jean de la Croix, C. D. (Toledo, 1912) par Chan. H. Hoornaert. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1922-1923.

          . Oeuvres Spirituelles. Translated by C. H. Hoornaert. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1925.

Vie et Oeuvres Spirituelles. Traduction nouvelle faite sur l'édition de Séville de 1702. Septième Édition. Tours: Alfred Mame, 1928.

Oeuvres de Saint Jean de la Croix. Traduction nouvelle par la Mère Marie du Saint Sacrement. Bar-le-duc: Imprimerie Saint Paul, 1933-1937. 4 vols.

Les Oeuvres Spirituelles du Bienheureux Père Jean de la Croix. Traduites par le R. P. Cyprion de la Nativité de la Vierge, C. D. Édition nouvelle par le Père Lucien-Marie de S. Joseph, C. D. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1945-1947.

Oeuvres Spirituelles. Traduction du R. P. Grégoire de Saint Joseph, C. D. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1947.

Les Oeuvres Spirituelles du Bienheureux Père Jean de la Croix. Traduites par le R. P. Cyprien de la Nativité de la Vierge, C. D. Ed. Père Lucien-Marie de S. Joseph, C. D. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1949.

Oeuvres Complètes. Traduites par le R. P. Cyprien de la Nativité de la Vierge, C. D. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959.

### (3.) Portuguese

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. Obras del Venerable i Místico Dotor F. Joan de la Cruz, Primer Descalço i Padre de la Reforma. Madrid: La Viuda de Madrigal, 1630.

Obras del Venerable y Místico Dotor F. Joan de la Cruz Primer Descalço y Padre de la Reforma. Barcelona: Sebastian de Cormellas, 1635.

### (4.) Italian

Juan de la Cruz. Opere Spirituali del Venerabil Padre F. Giovanni della Croce, Primo Scalzo della Riforma del Carmine. P. F. Diego di Giesu di detto Ordine, ed. Tradotte dalla Spagnuola nella lingua italiana del P. F. Alessandro di S. Francesco. Venetia: Appresso li Bertani, 1658.



- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere Spirituali. Tradotte dal P. F. Alessandro di S. Francesco. Venetia: Appresso li Bertani, 1671.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere Spirituali. Venetia: Andrea Poletti, 1707.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere Spirituali. Venezia: Andrea Poletti, 1729.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere Spirituali. Venezia: Andrea Poletti, 1739.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere di San Giovanni della Croce. Venezia: Angelo Geremia, 1749.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere Spirituali. Sesta edizione; Sig. Abate Jacopo Fabbrici, ed. Venezia: Andrea Poletti, 1749.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere Complete. Tradotte dal P. F. Marco di S. Francesco. Genova: Giovanni Fassi-Como, 1858-1859.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere Spirituali. Tradotte dal Rev. Paolo de Töth. Milano: S. Lega Eucaristica, 1912.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere Spirituali. Traduzione per Paolo de Töth. Acquapendente: "Lemurio," 1927. 2 vols.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere. Versione del R. P. Nazareno dell'Addolorata, OCD. Firenze: Libreria Fiorentina, 1949.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere. Versione del R. P. Nazareno dell'Addolorata, O. C. D. Roma: Postulazione Generale dei Carmelitani Scalzi, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere. V Edizione. Roma: Postulazione Generale dei Carmelitani Scalzi, 1959.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Opere. Versione del Padre Ferdinando di S. Maria, O. C. D. Roma: Postulazione Generale dei Carmelitani Scalzi, 1963.

## (5.) Latin

- Juan de la Cruz, Saint. Opera Mystica v. ac Mystici Doctoris B. Joannis a Cruce. Translata per R. P. F. Andream a Jesu. Coloniae Agrippinae: Jacobi Promper, 1710.

## (6.) Germanic

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. Verhole Wercken Vanden Salighen Ende Verlichten Leeraer Joannes Vanden Cruyce. Ghendi: Michiel Maes, 1693.

\_\_\_\_\_. Die sämtlichen Schriften des heiligen Johannes vom Kreuz. Sulzbach: J. E. v. Seidal, 1830. 2 v.

\_\_\_\_\_. Die sämtlichen Schriften des Heil. Johannes vom Kreuz. Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1858-59.

\_\_\_\_\_. Gaestelijke Werken van den H. Joannes a Cruce. Hilversum: Paul Brand, 1931-32.

\_\_\_\_\_. Des heiligen Johannes vom Kreuz sämtliche Werke in fünf Bänden. München: im Kösel-Kerlag, 1940-1952. 5 v. Translated by P. Aloysius ab Immac. Conceptione.

\_\_\_\_\_. Werken van de H. Joannes van het Kruis. Bussum: Paul Brand, 1950-1951. 2 v.

\_\_\_\_\_. Volledige werken. Hilversum: Paul Brand, 1963.

## (7.) English

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross. Translated by David Lewis. Ed. the Oblate Fathers of Saint Charles. London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1864. 2 v.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross, Doctor of the Church. Translated from the critical edition of P. Silverio de Santa Teresa. ed. E. Allison Peers. London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1934-35.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross. Translated from Critical Edition of Silverio de Santa Teresa, C. D. by E. Allison Peers. London, 1934. 3 vols.

\_\_\_\_\_. Complete Works. Translated from Critical Edition of P. Silverio de Santa Teresa, C. D. Ed. E. Allison Peers. Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1945-46. 3 v.

- \* \_\_\_\_\_ . The Complete Works of St. John of the Cross. Translated and edited by E. Allison Peers. London: Burns & Oates, 1964. 3 vols. in one.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_ . The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross. Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, O. C. D. and Otilio Rodríguez, O. C. D. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_ . The Mystical Doctrine of St. John of the Cross. Translated by David Lewis. ed. Dom Benedict Zimmerman, O. C. D. London: Sheed & Ward, 1953.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_ . Works. Translated by David Lewis. Revised by Benedict Zimmerman, C. D. The Ascent of Mount Carmel. London, 1928. The Dark Night of the Soul. London, 1935. A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul. London, 1919. The Living Flame of Love. London, 1934.

## 2. Editions of Separate Works

### (1.) Ascent of Mount Carmel

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. Subida del Monte Carmelo. Barcelona: Juan Roca y Bros., 1883.

\_\_\_\_\_. Ascent of Mount Carmel. Translated by David Lewis. London: Thomas Baker, 1928.

\_\_\_\_\_. Aufstieg zum Berge Karmel. Wien: B. Heiler, 1953.

\_\_\_\_\_. Ascent of Mount Carmel. Translated and edited by E. Allison Peers from P. Silverio de Santa Teresa. 3d. rev. ed. Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1958.

### (2.) The Dark Night

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. The Dark Night of the Soul. 4th ed. rev. New York: Benziger, 1917.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Dark Night of the Soul. 5th ed. rev. London: T. Baker, 1935.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Dark Night of the Soul. Translated and edited by Kurt F. Reinhardt. New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co., 1957.

\_\_\_\_\_. Dark Night of the Soul. Translated and edited by E. A. Peers from Silverio de Sta. Teresa. 3d. rev. ed. Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. Die dunkle Nacht der Seele. Trans. Felix Braun. Salzburg: O. Müller, 1952.

### (3.) Spiritual Canticle

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. Cántico Espiritual. Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, n. d.

\_\_\_\_\_. El Cántico Espiritual. Paris: Louis Michaud, n. d.

\_\_\_\_\_. A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and the Bridegroom Christ. Translated by David Lewis. London: T. Baker, 1909.

\_\_\_\_\_. A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and the Bridegroom Christ. Translated by David Lewis. London: T. Baker, 1919.

\_\_\_\_\_. Le Cantique Spirituel de Saint Jean de la Croix, Docteur de l'église. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer & Co., 1930.

\_\_\_\_\_. Le Cantique Spirituel de Saint Jean de la Croix, Docteur de l'église. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer & Co., 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. Le Texte du Cantique Spirituel. Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1951.

\_\_\_\_\_. Cantico Spirituale. Firenze: Libreria Fiorentina, 1948.

\_\_\_\_\_. Cantico Spirituale. Torino: T. T. E. T., 1946.

\_\_\_\_\_. Cántico Espiritual y Poesías de San Juan de la Cruz. ed. del P. Silverio de Sta. Teresa, C.D. Burgos: Tipografía "El Monte Carmelo," 1928.

\_\_\_\_\_. Cántico Espiritual y Poesías de san Juan de la Cruz. P. Silverio de Sta. Teresa, edition. Burgos: Tipografía "El Monte Carmelo," 1928.

. Le Cantique Spirituel. Traduit par Jean Descola. Paris: Alexis Redier, 1932.

. Le Cantique Spirituel de Saint Jean de la Croix, Docteur de l'église. Chevallier, Dom Ph., ed. Paris: Brouwer, 1930.

. Le Cantique Spirituel Suivi de Quatre Poemes Adaptes par Armand Godoy. Fribourg: Editions de la Librairie de l'Université, 1943.

. Cantique d'Amour Divin entre Jesus Christ et l'Âme Devote, par le Bienheureux Père Jean de la Croix. n. p.: Les Editions du Raisin, 1944.

. Cantique Spirituel entre l'Âme et Jésus Christ son Époux. Traduit par le R. P. Cyprien, C. D. Paris: J. & R. Wittman, 1947.

. Spiritual Canticle, 3d. rev. ed. Translated and edited by E. Allison Peers from critical ed. of P. Silverio de Santa Teresa. Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1961.

#### (4.) Living Flame of Love

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. The Living Flame of Love. Translated by David Lewis. London: Thomas Baker, 1912.

. Llama de Amor Viva. Edición por Padres Carmelitas Descalzos de Segovia. Segovia: Carlos Martín, 1930.

. The Living Flame of Love, With His Letters, Poems, and Minor Writings. Translated by David Lewis. London: Thomas Baker, 1934.

. Llama de Amor Viva. Segunda edición. Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 1954.

#### (5.) Instructions and Precautions.

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. Cautelas, Avisos y Sentencias de San Juan de la Cruz. Edición por los Padres Carmelitas Descalzos de Segovia. Madrid: Huelves, 1942.

\_\_\_\_\_. Cautelas, Avisos, Cartas, Dictamens. Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, n. d.

\_\_\_\_\_. Instructions and Precautions of St. John of the Cross.  
Wheeling West Virginia: Monastery of St. Teresa and St. John  
of the Cross of the Discalced Carmelites, 1918.

(6.) Maxims and Aphorisms

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. Die Armut des Geistes oder inwendige Gegenwart Gottes. Dinglingen (Baden): St. Johannis Druckerei, n. d.

\_\_\_\_\_. Avisos y Sentencias Espirituales Que Encaminan a un Alma a la mas Perfecta Union con Dios en Transformacion de Amor.  
Barcelona: los Padres Carmelitas Descalcos, 17--.

\_\_\_\_\_. Avisos y Sentencias Espirituales de San Juan de la Cruz.  
Buenos Aires: Cursos de Cultura Católica, 1940.

\_\_\_\_\_. Aphorismes de Saint Jean de la Croix. Translated from  
manuscript of Andujar. Bordeaux: Feret 7 Fils. Paris: E. de  
Boccard, 1924.

\_\_\_\_\_. Spiritual Maxims of St. John of the Cross, Carmelite. ed.  
Rev. A. E. Farrington, O. C. Dublin: James Duffy & Co., 1888.

\_\_\_\_\_. Maximes et Avis Spirituels de Notre Bienheureux Père  
Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris; Poitiers: M. Oudin, 1895.

\_\_\_\_\_. Aforismi e Poesie. Brascia: Morcellinia, 1943.

\_\_\_\_\_. Propos de Lumière et d'Amour de Saint Jean de la Croix.  
Traduits par Henri Chandebois. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1947.

\_\_\_\_\_. Les mots d'Ordre de Saint Jean de la Croix, Docteur de  
l'Eglise. Solerme: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1947.

\_\_\_\_\_. Les mots d'Ordre de Saint Jean de la Croix, Docteur de  
l'Eglise. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1947.

\_\_\_\_\_. Parole di Luce e di Amore. 2a. ed. Roma: Postulazione  
dei Carmelitani Scalzi, 1954.

\_\_\_\_\_. Avvisi per Dopo la Professione. Roma: Collegio Internazionale O. C. D., 1961.

\_\_\_\_\_. Avisos Para Después de Profesos. Edición y estudio por los Padres Simeón de la S. Familia, O. C. D. y Tomás de la Cruz, O. C. D. Roma: Facultas Theologica O. C. D., 1961.

(7.) Minor Poetic Works

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. Fray Luis de León y San Juan de la Cruz, Poesías. Madrid: Dirección y Administración, 1873.

\_\_\_\_\_. Poemes Mystiques de Saint Jean de la Croix. Traduction par un frere des Ecoles Chretiennes. Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1922.

\_\_\_\_\_. Lira Mística. Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 19--.

\_\_\_\_\_. Poesías de San Juan de la Cruz, Primer Carmelita Descalzo. Editas por los Padres Carmelitas Descalzos de Segovia. Segovia: Carlos Martín, 1929.

\_\_\_\_\_. Canciones. Translated by Rene-Louis Doyon. Paris: Edition de la Connaissance, n. d.

\_\_\_\_\_. Poesías Completas, Versos Comentados, Avisos y Sentencias, Cartas. Madrid: Signo, 1936.

\_\_\_\_\_. Trois Poèmes de Saint Jean de la Croix. Trans. Armand Godoy. Paris: B. Grasset, 1937.

\_\_\_\_\_. San Juan de la Cruz. Selección y Prólogo de Miguel Aznar. Barcelona: Editorial Yunque, 1939.

\_\_\_\_\_. Poesías Completas, Versos Comentados, Avisos y Sentencias, Cartas. Madrid: Signo, 1936.

\_\_\_\_\_. La Poesía de San Juan de la Cruz. ed. Eulalia Galvarriato de Alonso. Madrid: M. Aguilar, 1946.

\_\_\_\_\_. De Poezie van San Juan de la Cruz. Bussum: Paul Brand, 1946.

. Trois Poemes Mejeurs de Saint Jean de la Croix.  
Traduction de Pierre Darmangeat. Paris: Portes de France,  
1947.

. Les Poemes Mystiques de Saint Jean de la Croix, Docteur  
de l'Eglise. Traduits par le Pere Lucien-Marie de Saint  
Joseph, C. D. n. p.: Desclée de Brouwer, 1947.

. The Poems of St. John of the Cross. Translated by E.  
Allison Peers. London: Burns Oates, 1947.

. Poems. Translated by Roy Campbell. 1st ed. New York:  
Pantheon Books, 1951.

. Poems. Translated by John Frederick Nims. New York:  
Grove Press, 1959.

. Poems. Translated by Roy Campbell. Baltimore, Mary-  
land: Penguin Books, 1960.

. Poems. Translated by Roy Campbell. Harmondsworth:  
Penguin Books, Ltd., 1960.

. Poesías Completas y Otras Páginas. ed. José Manuel  
Bleca. Cuarta edición. Zaragoza: Editorial Ebro, S. L., 1961.

#### (8.) Compendia

Juan de la Cruz, Saint. Monte de Piedad y Concordancia Espiritual.  
ed. Domingo de Jesús María, O. C. D. Barcelona: 17--.

. Des heiligen Johannes vom Kreuz christliche Mystik.  
Simon Buchfeiner. Landshut: Vogel-sche Verlagsbuchhandlung,  
1841.

. A Thought for Every Day of the Year Taken from the  
Spiritual Writings of St. John of the Cross. Compiled by Susan  
L. Emery. Boston: Flynn & Mahony, 1891.

. Thoughts of St. John of the Cross for Every Day. Compiled  
by Kathleen Mary Balfe. New York: Benziger, 1924.



\_\_\_\_\_. Thoughts of St. John of the Cross for Every Day. Compiled by Kathleen Mary Balfé. London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1924.

\_\_\_\_\_. Counsels of Light and Love. Wheeling, West Virginia: Monastery of the Disc. Carmelite Nuns, n. d.

\_\_\_\_\_. Abregé de Toute la Doctrine Mystique de Saint Jean de la Croix, par Père Charles Henrion. Saint-Maximin: Editions de la Vie Spirituelle, 1925.

\_\_\_\_\_. Geist vom Berge Karmel; aus den Schriften des hl. Johannes vom Kreuz. Karl Wild. München: Josef Kösel & Friedrich Pustet, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Mystical Doctrine of St. John of the Cross. Abridgment made by Charles Henrion. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935.

\_\_\_\_\_. Páginas Escogidas. ed. Fernando Gutiérrez. Barcelona: L. Miracle, 1940.

\_\_\_\_\_. Obras Escogidas. ed. Ignacio B. Anzoátegui. Segunda edición. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1945.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Mystical Doctrine of St. John of the Cross. Abridgment made by Charles Henrion. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1946.

\_\_\_\_\_. Abregé de la Doctrine de Saint Jean de la Croix. Textes choisis par Père Charles Henrion. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1948.

\_\_\_\_\_. Prière Pure et Pureté du Coeur; Textes de Saint Grégoire le Grand et Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1953.

\_\_\_\_\_. Die Gotteslohe: Auswahl aus seinen Werken übertragen und eingeleitet von Irene Behn. Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1958.

\_\_\_\_\_. Estudio y Antología. ed. Luis Aguirre Prado. Madrid: Compañía Bibliográfica Española, 1964.

\_\_\_\_\_. Pensieri. Roma: Il Passero Solitario, 1963.

(9.) Apochryphal Works.

Juan de la Cruz, Saint, supposed author. Connaisance de Dieu et Union d'Amour. Traduction par le P. Théodore de Saint-Joseph, C. D. Bruges: Charles Beyaert, 1924.

\_\_\_\_\_, supposed author. Breve Tratado del Conocimiento Oscuro de Dios, por un Carmelita Descalzo. Burgos: "El Monte Carmelo," 1952.

(10.) Anthologies.

Aguirre Prado, Luis. San Juan de la Cruz; Estudio y Antología. Madrid: Compañía Bibliográfica Española, 1964, 1963.

Alessandro di Sa. Teresa, O. C. D. Terzo Centenario de S. Giovanni della Croce. Roma: Filippo Cuggiani, 1891.

Alonso, Dámaso. La Poesía de San Juan de la Cruz. Madrid: M. Aguilar, 1946.

Asín Palacios, Miguel. Obras Escogidas. Madrid: M. Aguilar, 1946.

## II. REDACTION STUDIES OF JOHN'S WORKS

Aloysius ab Imm. Conceptione. "Ist der Text der zweiten Redaktion des Geistlichen Gesangs vom hl. Johannes vom Kreuz selbst verbessert oder ist er apokryph?" Theologie und Glaube, 19---. 604-631.

Baruzi, Jean. Bulletin Hispanique, XXIV (1922), 18-40.

Bernadot, V. "Le texte authentique du Cantique Spirituel de S. Jean de la Croix," La Vie Spirituelle, (March, 1923), 154.

- Cavallera, F. Article in Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique (July, 1925), 307.
- Chevallier, Dom Ph. Bulletin Hispanique (October-December, 1922).  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . Etudes Carmélitaines (April, 1938).  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . La Vie Spirituelle (July-August, 1926), (January, 1927), (January, 1930), (July, 1931).
- De Guibert, J., S. J. Article in the Gregorianum (April-June, 1931).  
 Reproduced in Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique (July, 1931).
- Eugenio de San José, C. D. "Algunos Reparos a un Artículo de Fr. Ph. Chevallier, O. S. G. Sobre el Cántico Espiritual," Mensajero de Santa Teresa (June-July, 1927), 103, 142.
- Florencio del Niño Jesús, C. D. "Reparos a la Crítica de un Crítico," Mensajero de Santa Teresa (August, 1923-March, 1924).
- Gabriel de S. Marie-Madeleine, C. D. "Autor du Cantique Spirituel," Etudes Carmélitaines (April, 1934), 197.
- Louis de la Trinité, C. D. "Autor du Cantique Spirituel," Etudes Carmélitaines (Oct., 1931), (April, 1932), (Oct., 1932).  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . Revue des Sciences Phil. et Théol., XVI (1927), 39, 165.
- MacDonald, Inez Isabel. "The Two Versions of the Cántico Espiritual," Modern Language Review (April, 1930), 165-184.
- Martínez, M. San Juan de la Cruz. El Cántico Espiritual Según el ms. de las Madres Carmelitas de Jaén. Madrid: 1924.
- Mogenet, H., S. J. "L'ordre Primitif du Cántico," Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique, 18 (1937), 280-291.

### III. BIOGRAPHIES OF JOHN OF THE CROSS

#### 1. Spanish

- \*Bruno de Jesús Marie. San Juan de la Cruz. Madrid: Ediciones Fax, 1943.
- \*Crisógono de Jesús Sacramentado, O. C. D. Vida de San Juan de la Cruz. San Sebastian: Gráficas Fides, 1941.
- Evaristo de la Virgen del Carmelo, O. C. D. El Nuevo Doctor de la Iglesia, San Juan de la Cruz. 2a. edición. Toledo: Sebastián Rodríguez, 1927.
- \*Garzón, Padre F., S. J. Vida de San Juan de la Cruz. 4a ed. [Series: Vidas Populares] Madrid: Editorial Apostolado de la Prensa, 1953.
- Gerónimo de San José, O. C. D. Compendio de la Vida del Extático y Sublime Doctor Místico San Juan de la Cruz. Barcelona: Topografía Católica, 1891.
- \*Gerónimo de San José, O. C. D. Historia del Venerable Padre Fr. Juan de la Cruz. Madrid: Diego Díaz de la Carrera, 1641.
- Gesualda dello Spirito Santo, O. C. San Juan de la Cruz. Translated by Rvdo Dr. Juan-Angel Onate. Madrid: Pia Sociedad de San Pablo, 1944.
- José de Jesús María. Vida de San Juan de la Cruz. 3a ed. Burgos: Tip. de "El Monte Carmelo," 1927.
- José de Santa Teresa, O. C. D. Resunta de la Vida de N. Bienaventurado P. San Juan de la Cruz, Doctor Mystico. Madrid: Bernardo de Villa-Diego, 1675.
- Maza, Josefina de la, y María Jiménez Salas. Vida de San Juan de la Cruz. Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1947.

- Muñoz Garnica, Manuel. San Juan de la Cruz, Ensayo Histórico. Jaén: Imprenta de los Señores Rubio, 1875.
- Rosell, Pedro. Epítome de la Vida del Bienaventurado S. Juan de la Cruz. Barcelona: Rafael Figuera, 1675.
- \*Sandoval, Adolfo de. San Juan de la Cruz; El Santo, el Doctor Místico, el Poeta. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1942.
- Silverio de Santa Teresa. Historia del Carmen Descalzo en España, Portugal y América. Burgos: Tipografía Burgalesa, 1935.
- \*Vega, Luis Antonio de. San Juan de la Cruz. Madrid: Nevas Editoriales Unidas, 1961.
- \*Waach, Hildegard. San Juan de la Cruz. Madrid: Rialp, 1960.

## 2. French

- Abregé de la Vie, Virtus et Miracles de Saint Jean de la Croix. Traduit par R. P. Amable de Saint Joseph. Paris: Jean Baptiste la Mesle et Gonichon, 1725.
- Bruno de Jésus-Marie. Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: 1929. English translation--London: 1932. Italian translation--San Giovanni della Croce, Milano: 1938.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Saint Jean de la Croix. Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée. Paris: Plon, 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1961.
- Collet, M. La Vie de S. Jean de la Croix. Paris: Chez Méquignon Junior, 1826.
- Chandebois, Henri. Portrait de Saint-Jean de la Croix, la Flûte de Roseau. Paris: Grasset, 1947.
- Cristiani, Léon. Saint Jean de la Croix, Prince de la Mystique. Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1960.

Déchaussé, Carme. La Vie de St. Jean de la Croix. Paris: Chez l'Editeur. 9th edition, 1810.

Deminuid, Mgr. St. Jean de la Croix. septieme ed. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1932.

Dosithee de Saint Alexis, O. C. D. La Vie de St. Jean de la Croix. Paris: Christophe David, 1727.

\_\_\_\_\_. La Vie de S. Jean de la Croix. Paris: Poussielgue, 1872.

Gesualda dello Spirito Santo, O. C. Saint Jean de la Croix. Translated by Lelio Tonini. Paris: Apostolat de la Presse, 1950.

José de Jesús María Quiroga, O. C. D. La Vie du Bien-Heureux Pere Jean de la Croix. Translated by R. P. E. S. B. Revue Nouvelle par Cyprien de la Nativité de la Vierge. Paris: Chez la Veufve Pierre Chevalier, 1642.

Marie-Claire de Jésus, Soeur. St. Jean de la Croix Intime. Gaud, Belgique: Veritas, 1923. Also: Melines: Convent des Carmélites Dechaussées, 1923.

Mauger, Gilles. Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: Apostolat de la Presse, 1959.

Poinsenet, Marie-Dominique. Par un Sentier à Pic; Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1960.

Razy, Ernest. Saint Jean de la Croix; Sa Vie et Sa Doctrine. Paris: Tournai, N. Casterman, 1861.

Thomas de Saint-Laurent. Saint Jean de la Croix. Avignon: Aubanel, 1926.

Vincelot, Mag. Jean de la Croix, l'Ange Que Fut Homme. Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1958.

Wasmer, Mme. Marie Elvire (della Donne) de. Huit Mystiques Espagnols. Paris: Editions Corrêa, 1940.

### 3. English

Bruno de Jesus-Marie, O. D. C. St. John of the Cross. ed., Fr. Benedict Zimmerman, O. D. C. London: Sheed & Ward, 1932.

\* \_\_\_\_\_ . St. John of the Cross. ed., Fr. Benedict Zimmerman, O. D. C. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1936.

\_\_\_\_\_ . Three Mystics: El Greco, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1949.

\*Crisógono de Jesús, O. C. D. Translated by Kathleen Pond. The Life of St. John of the Cross. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1958. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958.

Cristiani, Léon. St. John of the Cross, Prince of Mystical Theology. Translated from French. 1st American ed. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1962.

Kramer, Herbert George. Crucified with Christ. New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1949.

Lewis, David. The Life of Saint John of the Cross. New York: The Catholic Publication Society, 1873. Also London, 1897.

\_\_\_\_\_ . Life of St. John of the Cross. London: Burns & Oates, 1873.

Paschasius of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Father. Saint John of the Cross. Washington, D. C.: 1919.

Rohrbach, Peter Thomas. Bold Encounter; A Novel Based on the Life of St. John of the Cross. Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1960.

\*Sencourt, Robert. Carmelite and Poet, A Framed Portrait of St. John of the Cross. London: Hollis and Carter, 1943.

Sisters of Notre Dame, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool. Life of Saint John of the Cross, Mystical Doctor. London: T. Baker, 1927.

4. Italian

Bruno de Jesús Marie, O. C. D. San Giovanni della Croce. Milano: "Vita e Pensiero," 1938.

Crisógono de Jesús Sacramentado, O. C. D. Vita di San Giovanni della Croce, Dottore Mistico. Translated by P. Ferdinando di Santa Maria, O. C. D. Milano: Ancora, 1955.

Filippo Maria di S. Paolo, O. C. D. Vita del Beato Giovanni della Croce. Roma, Napoli: Giacinto Passaro, 1675.

Francesco dell'Immacolata Concezione, O. C. D. San Giovanni della Croce. Milano: S. Lega Eucaristica, 1927.

Francesco Saverio di S. Teresa, O. C. D. S. Giovanni della Croce, Dottore della Chiesa. Milano: Casa Editrice S. Lega Eucaristica, 1929.

Gesualda dello Spirito Santo, O. Carm. S. Giovanni della Croce. II ed., Roma: Pia Società San Paolo, 1941.

San Giovanni della Croce. Alba: Pia Società San Paolo, n. d.

José de Jesús María, O. C. D. (Quiroga). Vita del V. P. F. Gio. della Croce. Brescia: Antonio Rizzardi, 1638.

Stanislao di S. Teresa, O. C. D. San Giovanni della Croce. Milano: S. Lega Eucaristica, 1926.

Storia della Vita, Virtu', Doni, e Miracoli di S. Giovanni della Croce. Roma: Pietro Ferri, 1726.

5. Germanic

Dosithee de Saint Alexis, O. C. D. Leven van den heiligen vader Joannes a Cruce. Gent: Drukkerij van J. B. Rousseau, Vader, 1854.



Lechner, Peter, O. S. B. Leben des Heiligen Johannes van Kreuz.  
Regensburg: Georg Joseph Manz, 1858.

Smackers, Amandus, father, O. C. D. Het leven van de heilige  
Joannes van het Kruis. Bassum: P. Brand, 1952.

Specker, E. Johannes vom Kreuz. Stans: Josef von Matt, 1957.

Waach, Hildegard. Johannes vom Kreuz. Wien: Verlag Herold, 1954.

#### 6. Portuguese and Latin

Jaime de San José, O. C. D. San Joao da Cruz. 2a. ed. Porto: Porta  
Editora, 1958.

Alberto di San Gaetano, O. C. D. Vita Mystici Doctoris Sancti Joannis  
a Cruce. Venetiis: 1748.

### IV. DOCTRINAL STUDIES OF JOHN'S WORKS

#### 1. Studies Exclusively of John's Doctrine

Arbiol, Antonio. Mística Fundamental de Cristo Señor Nuestro Ex-  
plicada por el Glorioso y Beato Padre San Juan de la Cruz.  
Zaragoza: 1723.

Athanase de l'Immaculte Conception, trans. Traité des Espines de  
l'Esprit de Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: Librairie Religieuse  
H. Oudin, 1896.

Barrientos, Urbano del Niño Jesús, O. C. D. Purificación y Purgatorio.  
Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 1960.

Baruzi, Jean. Saint Jean de la Croix et le Probleme de l'Experience  
Mystique. Paris: F. Alcan, 1924.

- \*Benedictine of Stanbrook Abbey, A. Mediaeval Mystical Tradition and Saint John of the Cross. London: Burns & Oates, 1954. Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1954.
- Bertini, Giovanni Maria. Profilo Estetico di S. Giovanni della Croce. Venezia: Mantuoro, 1944.
- Besse, Ludovic de, O. F. M. Cap. Éclaircissements Sur les Oeuvres Mystiques de S. Jean de la Croix. Paris: Librairie du Crédit Mutuel et Populaire, 1893.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Light on Mount Carmel. ed. in English by a monk of Parkminster. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1926. (Paris, 1893) (Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1893).
- Boudon, Henry-Marie. La Vive Flamme d'Amour dans la Bienheureux Jean de la Croix. Paris: Jean-Thomas Herissant, 1749.
- \*Brice, Father, C. P. Journey in the Night. New York and Cincinnati: Frederick Pustet Co., 1945.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. Spirit in Darkness. New York: Frederick Pustet Co., Inc., 1946.
- Bruno de Jésus-Marie, Pere, O. C. D. Vie d'Amour de Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: Desclée, de Brouwer, 1936. Also 1944.
- Calaber, Abbé. La Terminologie de S. Jean de la Croix. Paris: Brouwer, 1904.
- Carbonero y Sol, León. Homenaje a San Juan de la Cruz. Madrid: "La Cruz," 1891.
- Certamen Literario en Honor de San Juan de la Cruz. Segovia: Imprenta Provincial, 1892.
- Chevallier, Dom Moine de Solesmes. Le Cantique Espiritual de Saint Jean de la Croix, Docteur de l'Eglise. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1930.
- Chevallier, Philippe, O. S. B. Saint Jean de la Croix, Docteur des Ames. Aubier: Editions Moutaigne, 1959.

Crisógono de Jesús Sacramentado, C. D. San Juan de la Cruz, El Hombre, el Doctor--el Poeta. Barcelona: Editorial Labor, 1935.

\* \_\_\_\_\_ . San Juan de la Cruz, Su Obra Científica y Su Obra Literaria. Madrid: Editorial Mensajero de Santa Teresa y de San Juan de la Cruz, 1929.

Dalton, the Rev. Canon, ed. and trans. The Spirit of St. John of the Cross. London: Thomas Richardson & Son, 1863.

Devota Novena al Seráfico Padre y Místico Doctor S. Juan de la Cruz. Barcelona: Pedro Gomita, n. d.

D'Hendecourt, Marie-Madeleine. Le Chemin de l'Amour d'Après Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1953.

\*Dicken, E. W. Trueman. The Crucible of Love. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1963. Also New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Crucible of Love. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963.

Diego de Jesús, C. D. "Apuntamientos y Advertencias en Tres Discursos Para Mas Facil Intelligencia de las Frases Místicas y Doctrine de las Obras Espirituales de Nuestro Padre San Juan de la Cruz," (contained in the 3rd volume of the Toledo edition of Gerardo de Santa Teresa, pp. 465-502).

Doroteo de la Sagrada Familia, O. C. D. Diálogos Místicos Sobre la "Subida del Monte Carmelo" del Místico Doctor de la Iglesia San Juan de la Cruz. Barcelona: Luis Gili, 1942.

Dosithee de Saint-Alixis. Vie de Saint Jean de la Croix. (Avec dissertation sur la theologie mystique) Paris: Brouwer, 1727. 2 vols.

\*Efrén de la Madre de Dios, O. C. D. San Juan de la Cruz y el Misterio de la Stma. Trinidad en la Vida Espiritual. Zaragoza: "El Noticiero," 1947.

Eliseus of the Sacred Heart, C. D. The Nature of the Passive Night of the Spirit According to the Mystical Doctor Saint John of the Cross. Thesis presented in the Theological Faculty of the "Theresianum," Rome, 1939.

Eulogio de San José, O. C. D. Doctorado de Santa Teresa de Jesús y de San Juan de la Cruz. Cordoba: Imprenta y Librería del "Diario," 1896.

Eulogio de la Virgen del Carmen, O. C. D. El "Prologo y la Hermeneutica del Cantico Espiritual," (Excerpta ex dissertatione ad lauream. Roma, 1958).

Evaristo de la Virgen del Carmen. San Juan de la Cruz. Toledo: 1927.

Ezequiel del S. C. de Jesús, C. D. Método de Oración y Contemplación Según San Juan de la Cruz. Bilbao: 1935.

\*Frost, Bede. Saint John of the Cross. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1937.

Gabriele di Santa Maria Madalena, O. C. D. Acquired Contemplation. Cork: The Mercier Press, 1947.

\_\_\_\_\_. Attualita' di S. Giovanni della Croce. Firenze: Libreria Fiorentina, 1946.

\_\_\_\_\_. La Contemplazione Acquisita. Firenze: Fiorentina, 1938.

\_\_\_\_\_. S. Giovanni della Croce. [Series: Spiritualita Teresiana] Rome: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1937.

\_\_\_\_\_. S. Giovanni della Croce Direttore Spirituale. Firenze: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1942.

\_\_\_\_\_. S. Giovanni della Croce Dottore dell'Amore Divino. Seconda edizione riveduta dall'autore. Firenze: Libreria Fiorentina, 1943.

\_\_\_\_\_. San Giovanni della Croce, Dottore dell'Amore Divino. Firenze: Fiorentina, 1936.

- \_\_\_\_\_. The Spiritual Director, According to the Principles of St. John of the Cross. Translated by a Benedictine of Stanbrook Abbey. Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1952.
- \_\_\_\_\_. St. John of the Cross. Rome: Fiorentina, 1938.
- \_\_\_\_\_. St. John of the Cross. Cork: Mercier, 1947.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_ . St. John of the Cross; Doctor of Divine Love and Contemplation. Translated by a Benedictine of Stanbrook Abbey. London: Thomas Baker, 1940. Also Cork: Mercier Press, 1946.
- \_\_\_\_\_. La Unión con Dios Según San Juan de la Cruz. Translated by Julio Felix del Niño Jesus, O. C. D. Burgos: "El Monte Carmelo," 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "De Unione Animae cum Deo per Charitatem Perfectam Secundam d. Thomam et S. Joannem a Cruce," Actu Pont. Acad. Romanae S. Thomae, 1936, pp. 120-139.
- \_\_\_\_\_. L'Unione con Dio Secondo San Giovanni della Croce. Firenze: A. Salani, 1951.
- \_\_\_\_\_. L'Unione con Dio Secondo San Giovanni della Croce. 2a. ed. Roma: Monastero S. Giuseppe, Carmelitane Scalze, 1956.
- Gapanaga, Victorine de San Agustín, O. R. S. A. San Juan de la Cruz; Valor Psicológico de su Doctrina. Madrid: Juan Bravo, 1950.
- García Setién, Emeterio de Jesús María, O. C. D. Las Raíces de la Poesía Sanjuanista y Damaso Alonso. Burgos: "El Monte Carmelo," 1950.
- Garnica, Don Manuel Muñoz. San Juan de la Cruz--Ensayo Histórico. Jaén: Rubio, 1875.
- San Giovanni della Croce Dottore Mistico; l'uomo, la dottrina, l'influsso. Firenze: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1942.
- Herrero García, Miguel. San Juan de la Cruz. Madrid: Escelicer, 1942.

Hoorraert, Rudolphe. The Burning Soul of St. John of the Cross.  
Translated by Algar Thorold. London: Burns, Oates &  
Washbourne Ltd., 1931.

\_\_\_\_\_. L'Âme Ardente de S. Jean de la Croix. Paris: Desclee de  
Brouwer, 1929.

Icaza, Rosa María. "The Stylistic Relationship Between Poetry and  
Prose in the Cantico Espiritual of San Juan de la Cruz." (Thesis)  
Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1957.

Jiménez Duque, Baldomero. En Torno a San Juan de la Cruz. Bar-  
celona: Juan Flores, 1960.

Johannes vom Kreuz, T. O. C. D., ed. Zehntägige Andach zum heiligen  
Johannes vom Kreuz, erster unbeschuhter Karmelit. Regens-  
burg: Pustet, 1891.

Josephus a Jesu María (Quiroga). Subida del Alma a Dios. Madrid:  
1656.

\_\_\_\_\_. Salita dell'Anima a Dio. Translated by Baldassaro di Santa  
Caterina. Roma: 1664.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Don Que Tuvo San Juan de la Cruz Para Guiar las Almas  
a Dios." Contained in 3rd volume of the Toledo edition of the  
Obras de San Juan de la Cruz. Cf. Gerardo.

Juan José de la Inmaculada Concepción, O. C. D. La Psicología de San  
Juan de la Cruz. Santiago: "Sagrado Corazón de Jesús," 1944.

\_\_\_\_\_. El Último Grado del Amor. Santiago de Chile: Leblanc,  
1941.

Krynen, Jean. Le Cantique Spirituel de Saint Jean de la Croix Com-  
menté et Refondu au XVIIe Siècle. Salamanca: Universidad de  
Salamanca, 1948.

Landrieux. Sur les Pas de Saint Jean de la Croix Dan le Désert et  
Dans la Nuit. Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1924.

Lechner, P. Peter. Johannes von Kreuz, Ersten Barflisser-Karmeliten.  
Regensburg: Georg Joseph Manz, 1858.

Louis de la Trinité, C. D. Le Docteur Mystique. Paris: 1929.

\_\_\_\_\_. Articles in Etudes Carmelitaines (October, 1937), (October, 1938).

Lucas de San José. Holiness in the Cloister. Translated by Father Paschasius of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, O. C. D. Chicago: M. A. Donohue & Co., 1920.

\_\_\_\_\_. La Santidad en el Claustro. Barcelona: Rafael Casulleras, 1920.

\_\_\_\_\_. La Santidad en el Claustro. Cuarta edición corregida y notablemente aumentada. Barcelona: Centro de Propaganda de Santa Teresita del Niño Jesús en España y América, 1945.

\* \_\_\_\_\_ . The Secret of Sanctity of St. John of the Cross. Translated by Sister Mary Alberto. Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1962.

Lucien Marie de Saint Joseph, Father., O. C. D. La Communion dans l'Attente. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952.

Manoel de Sa. Memorias Historicas, Panegyricas, e Metricas do Sagrado Culto. Lisboa Occidental: Miguel Rodrigues, 1728.

Marcelo del Niño Jesús, O. C. D. El Tomismo de San Juan de la Cruz. Burgos: "El Monte Carmelo," 1930.

Marie, Mère du Saint Sacrement. Une Retraite Sous la Conduite de Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1927.

\_\_\_\_\_. A Retreat Under the Guidance of St. John of the Cross. London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1930.

Maritain, Jacques. Alles en niets, het todo y nada van Joannes a Cruce. Oostvleteren: G. Vandeputte, 1946.

\_\_\_\_\_. Mystical Doctrine of St. John of the Cross. Translated by David Lewis. Revised by Dom Benedict Zimmerman, C. D. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1936.

- Martin, Henri. La Thème de la Parfaite Alliance de Grâce dans Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1954.
- \*Martín de Jesús María, O. C. D. San Juan de la Cruz al Alcance de Todos. Barcelona: Balmes, 1943.
- McCann, Leonard A. The Doctrine of the Void. Toronto, Rochester: Basilian Press, 1955.
- McIntosh, Mary Blandina, S. M. Estudio Literario del Epistolario de San Juan de la Cruz. (Typescript thesis--M. A.) San Francisco: San Francisco College for Women, 1962.
- \*McMahon, John Joseph. The Divine Union in the Subida del Monte Carmelo and the Noche Oscura of Saint John of the Cross. (Thesis, S. T. D.) Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1941.
- Miguel Angel Díaz de S. Teresa, Fr., O. C. D. "La Sabiduría de los Perfectos: Estudio Teológico Sobre el Inlujo Paulino en los Escritos de San Juan de la Cruz," (Unpublished thesis for Teresium--Rome: 1966.)
- Milner, Max. Poesie et Vie Mystique Chez Saint Juan de la Croix. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1951.
- Morel. Le Sens de l'Existence Selon s. Jean de la Croix. Paris: Aubier, 1960-61. 3 vols.
- Nel Secondo Centenario della Canonizzazione di Giovanni della Croce. Milano: S. Lega Eucaristica, 1927.
- Nicolaus, A Jesu Maria, C. D. Phrasium Mysticae Theologiae V. P. F. Joannis a Cruce . . . Elucidatio. Coloniae Agrippinae: 1639.
- Oliveira, José de, O. SS. T. Sermão da Canonização de S. João da Cruz. Lisboa Occidental: Na Officina Ferreiriana, 1728.
- Pascal du Saint Sacrement C. D. "Saint Jean de la Croix," Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, VIII, 767-787.
- Pastourel, Dom. "La Doctrine de Jean de la Croix," Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne, " Oct., 1912.



- \*Peers, Edgar Allison. Spirit of Flame; A Study of St. John of the Cross. London: Student Christian Movement Press, Ltd., 1943. Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1944.
- Pelle-Doubl, Yvonne. Saint Jean de la Croix et la Nuit Mystique. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1960.
- Peters, Joannes a Cruce, O. C. D. Geloof en Mystiek; Een Theologische Bezinning op de Geestelijke Leer van Sint--Jan van het Kruis. Leuven: Uitgeverij E. Nauwelaerts, 1957.
- Phillippe, A., C. SS. R. Le Point Central de la Doctrine de Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: Doctrine et Verite, 1929.
- Poulain, Aug., S. J. La Mystique de S. Jean de la Croix. Paris: 1893.
- Raynaldus, M. a S. Justo. "Eminentia Theologia S. P. N. Joannis a Cruce," Analecta O. C. D., 1926-27.
- Roberto di Santa Teresa, O. C. D. Alcune Considerazioni sul Dottorato si san Giovanni della Croce. Venezia: Premiata Scuola tip Istituto Manin, 1927.
- \*Ruano, Nazario, O. C. D. "Desnudez"; Lo Místico y lo Literario en San Juan de la Cruz. México: Editorial Polis, 1961.
- Sabino de Jesús, fray, O. C. D. San Juan de la Cruz y la Crítica Literaria. Santiago, Chile: Talleres Gráficos "San Vicente," 1942.
- Sanjuanistica. Roma: Collegium Internationale Sanctorum Teresiae a Jesu et Joannis a Cruce, 1943.
- Sanson, Henri. L'Esprit Humain Selon Saint Jean de la Croix. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953.
- . Saint Jean de la Croix Entre Bossuet et Fenelon. 1. ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953.
- Soler, Luis M. Homenaje a San Juan de la Cruz en el IV Centenario de Nacimiento. Barcelona: Biblioteca Central, 1945.

- Scaramelli, Giovanni Battista, S. J. Dottrina di S. Giovanni della Croce. Roma: Pia Societa' S. Paolo, 1946.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Dottrina di San Giovanni della Croce Compresa in Tre Brevi Trattati. Venezia: 1815.
- \*Steggink, Otger, O. C. La Reforma del Carmelo Español. Roma: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1965.
- Stein, Edith. The Science of the Cross, A Study of St. John of the Cross. Edited by L. Gelber and Romaeus Leuven. Translated by Hilda Graef. Chicago: Regnery, 1960.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. The Science of the Cross: A Study of St. John of the Cross. Translated by Hilda Graef. London: Burns & Oates, 1960.
- \*Steuart, R. H. The Mystical Doctrine of St. John of the Cross. London: Sheed & Ward, 1948.
- Theodore de Saint Joseph. Vers l'Union Parfaite d'Après Saint Jean de la Croix. Courtrai: Voorintgans, 1927.
- Teodosio de Santa Inés, O. C. D. Una Boda en Fontiveros (Leyenda de Costumbres). La Habana: A Muñoz, 1929.
- Valencia, Doña Carolina. A San Juan de la Cruz. Madrid: Imprenta y Fundición de M. Tello, 1891.
- Valentí, José Ignacio. Examen Crítico de las Obras de San Juan de la Cruz. Madrid: 1892.
- Vallee, O. P. Saint Jean de la Croix; Sa Vie, Sa Doctrine. Paris: P. Lethielleux, N. D. Lille, 1892.
- Verschaeve, Cyriel. De Dichter Joannes a Cruce. Brugge: "Excelsior," 1926.
- Vilnet, Jean. Bible et Mystique Chez Saint Jean de la Croix. Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1949.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. La Biblia en la Obra de San Juan de la Cruz. Translated and edited by P. Marcelliano de Lizaso, O. F. M. Cap. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Desclée de Brouwer, 1953.

Viteri, Félix S. de, ed. Homenaje de Devoción y Amor a San Juan de la Cruz, Doctor de la Iglesia. Segovia: "El Adelantado," 1926.

Wenceslao del SS. Sacramento, O. C. D. Fisionomía de un Doctor. Salamanca: Establecimiento Tipográfico de Calatrava a Cargo de Manuel F. Criado, 1913.

## 2. Studies Including John's Doctrine

Antolínez, Agustín, O. S. A. Amores de Dios y el Alma. Madrid: El Escorial, 1956.

Archange de la Reine du Carmel, father, O. C. D. Histoire des Miracles du Saint Scapulaire. Bruges: 1962.

Baldassaro de S. Caterina di Siena. Splendori Riflessi di Sapienza Celeste. Bologna: 1671.

\*Brice, father. Teresa, John and Therese, A Family Portrait of Three Great Carmelites: Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Therese of Lisieux. New York and Cincinnati: F. Pustet Co., 1946.

\*Butler, Cuthbert (Benedictine Monk). Western Mysticism. London: Constable & Company, 1922; Arrow Books, 1960.

Crisógono de Jesús Sacramentado, C. D. La Escuela Mística Carmelitana. Madrid: Editorial Mensajero de Santa Teresa y de San Juan de la Cruz, 1930.

\*Delacroix, Henri. Etudes d'Histoire et de Psychologie du Mysticisme les Grands Mystiques Chrétiens. Paris: Felix Alcan, 1908.

\*Devine, Arthur (Passionist Priest). A Manual of Mystical Theology. London: R. & T. Washbourne, 1903. Also London: R. & T. Washbourne, 1903.

Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, C. D. "Carmes Dechaussés," Dict. de Spiritualité, VII, 171-210.

Garrigou-Lagrange, Réginald. Perfection Chrétienne et Contemplation s'elon S. Thomas d'Aquin et S. Jean de la Croix. Paris: 1923.  
2 vols.

\* \_\_\_\_\_ . Christian Perfection and Contemplation According to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross. Translated by Sister M. Timothea Doyle. St. Louis, Missouri and London: B. Herder Book Co., 1937. Also--St. Louis, 1946. Also, London, 1958.

Giacomo della Passione, O. C. D. Mese Santificato in Onore di S. Giovanni della Croce. Viterbo: Sperandio Pompei, 1875.

Guillen, Jorge. Language and Poetry: Some Poets of Spain. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961.

\*Gutiérrez-Marín, C. R. Místicos Españoles del Siglo 16. México: Casa Unida de Publicaciones, 1946.

Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, C. D. (Hispanus). Cursus Theologiae Mystico-Scholasticae. Editio P. Anastasii a S. Paulo, Bruges: 1924.  
6 vols. (4 completed).

Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, C. D. (Lusitanus). Enucleatio Mysticae Theologiae S. Dionysii Areopagitae. Editio critica a P. Anastasio a S. Paulo exarata. Romae: 1927.

\*Lea, Henry Charles. Chapters from the Religious History of Spain Connected With the Inquisition. Philadelphia: Lea Brothers & Co., 1890.

Lucien-Marie de St. Joseph, O. C. D. De Contemplatione in Schola Teresiana. Ephemerides Carmelitic (1962), 63-79.

Maréchal, Joseph, S. J. Etudes sur la Psychologie des Mystiques. Vol. I--Paris and Bruxelles, 1924. Vol. II--1937.

\* \_\_\_\_\_ . Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics. Burns, Oates and Washbourne.

Marijse, Antonius, O. C. D. Mystiek als Christusbeleving. Gent: Hitgeverij Bergbron, 1960.

Maritain, Jacques. Les Degrés du Savoir. Paris, 1934.

\* \_\_\_\_\_ . The Degrees of Knowledge. Translated by Bernard Wall. Centenary Press, 1937. Also--London: Bles, 1959, new ed.

Merton, Thomas. Disputed Questions. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1960.

\*Peers, Edgar Allison. A Handbook to the Life and Times of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. London: Burns Oates, 1954. Also--Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1954.

\* \_\_\_\_\_ . The Mystics of Spain. [Series: "Ethical and Religious Classics of the East and West"] London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1951.

\* \_\_\_\_\_ . St. John of the Cross, and Other Lectures and Addresses, 1920-1945. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1946.

\_\_\_\_\_ . Saint Teresa of Jesus, and other Essays and Addresses. London: Faber and Faber, 1953.

\_\_\_\_\_ . Spanish Mysticism; A Preliminary Survey. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1924.

\* \_\_\_\_\_ . Studies of the Spanish Mystics. 2d. ed. rev. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1960. Also--London, 1927.

Sa, Manuel de, O. Carm. Memorias Historicas, Panegyricas e Metricas. Lisboa Occidental: Miguel Rodríguez, 1728.

Ulanov, Barry. Sources and Resources; The Literary Traditions of Christian Humanism. Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1960.

Watkin, E. I. Poets and Mystics. London: Sheed, 1953.

Rockley, C.

## V. RELATED STUDIES IN MYSTICISM

1. General

- Antonius a Sp. Sancto. Directorium Mysticum. Edition of Bernardus a Ss. Sacramento. Parisiis, 1904.
- Augustine, Saint. An Augustine Synthesis. Arranged by Erick Przywara. London: Sheed & Ward, 1936.
- Aumann, A. Royo- J., O. P. The Theology of Christian Perfection. Dubuque: Priory Press, 1962.
- \*Benson, Monseigneur. Mysticism. Sands & Co., n. d.
- \*Caird, Edward. The Evolution of Religion. New York: MacMillan Co., 1894.
- \*Carrit, E. Y. The Theory of Beauty. New York: MacMillan, 1914.
- Chapman, J. Spiritual Letters. London, 1935. Also--London: Sheed & Ward, 1938.
- \*Cobb, W. F. Mysticism and the Creed. London: MacMillan, 1914.
- Conwell, J. F., S. J. Contemplation in Action. Spokane: Gonzaga Univ., 1957.
- \*Crehan, J. H. The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism. London: Burns & Oates, 1951.
- Crisógono de Jesús Sacramentado, C. D. Compendio de Ascética y Mística. Madrid, 1933.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Asceticae et Mysticae. Summa. Turin, 1936.
- \*Dewey, John. The Quest for Certainty. New York: Minton Balch & Co., 1929.

- \*Dyson, W. H. Studies in Christian Mysticism. London: James Clarke & Co., 1913.
- \*Ellis, Havelock. The Dance of Life. New York: Book League of America, 1923.
- \*Ewer, Mary Anita. A Survey of Mystical Symbolism. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1933.
- \*Fairweather, William. Among the Mystics. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936.
- \*Farmer, H. H. Experience of God. London: SCM Press, 1929.
- Fonk. "Mystique," and "Perfection Chrétienne," Articles in the Dict. de Théologie Catholique.
- Frost, Bede. The Rule of St. Albert--A New Translation. Boars Hill Oxford: Carmelite Fathers, 1966.
- Gardiel, A. O. P. "Dons du S.-Esprit," Dict. de Théologie Catholique, IV, cc. 1728-1781.
- Garrigou-Lagrange, R., O. P. L'Amour de Dieu et la Croix de Jesus. Paris, 1929. 2 vols.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Les Trois Ages de la Vie Intérieure. Paris, 1938. 2 v.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Three Ages of the Interior Life. St. Louis: Herder, 1948. 2 v.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Les Trois Conversions et les Trois Voies. Juvisy, 1933.
- Goodier, Alban. An Introduction to the Study of Ascetical and Mystical Theology. London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1938.
- Guilliani, M., S. J. Finding God in All Things. Translated by W. J. Young. Chicago: Regnery, 1958.
- Haldane, R. B. The Pathway to Reality (2 vols.) New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1926.

- \*Herman, E. The Meaning and Value of Mysticism. London: James Clarke & Co., 1915.
- Hermann, Emily. Eucken and Bergson. 3rd ed. London: J. Clarke & Co., 1913.
- Hocking, Wm. Ernest. The Meaning of God in Human Experience. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1922.
- Hügel, Friedrich von. Eternal Life. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. The Mystical Element in Religion. Vol. I--Introduction and Biographies. Vol. II--Critical Studies. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1961.
- Huxley, Julian Sorell. Religion Without Revelation. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927.
- \*Inge, Wm. Ralph. Christian Mysticism. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1899. Also--8th edition, 1948.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. Mysticism in Religion. London: Hutchinson's Univ. Library, n.d.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. Personal Idealism and Mysticism. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1907.
- Jacks, Lawrence P. The Inner Sentinel. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1930.
- Jaegen, Jerome. La Vie Mystique. Traduit de l'allemand par Albert Desguiges. Paris, 1936.
- James, William. A Pluristic Universe. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1928.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. Varieties of Religious Experience. New Hyde Park, N. Y.: University Books, 1963.
- Joannes a Sancto Thoma, O. P. Cursus Theologicus. Ed. Vives. Parisii, 1885.



- Jones, Sir Henry. A Faith That Inquires. New York: MacMillan, 1922.
- \*Jones, Rufus M. New Studies in Mystical Religion. London: MacMillan and Co., 1927.
- \*Knowles, David. What Is Mysticism? London: Burns & Oates, 1967.
- \*Knowles, M. D. The Nature of Mysticism. New York: Harthorn Books, 1966.
- \*Larkin, Ernest E., O. C. "Mystical Theology." Unpublished paper. Washington, D. C.: Whitefriars' Hall.
- LeJeune, de Abbe. An Introduction to the Mystical Life. London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1915.
- Louismet, Savinien. The Mystical Knowledge of God. London: Burns & Oates, 1917.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Mysticism True and False. London: Burns & Oates, 1919.
- \*Maloney, Samuel Dow. An Introduction into the Relationship Between Mysticism and Reformed Theology. Thesis for Master of Theology. Union Theological Seminary in Virginia; Richmond, 1952.
- McAlpine, J. Warren. "The Validity of Mystical Knowledge." Unpublished thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1931.
- \*McIntyre, John. The Shape of Christology. London: SCM Press, Ltd.
- Mystery and Mysticism. London: Blackfriars', 1956.
- Neuner, S. J., and Roos, Heinrich, S. J., and Rahner, Karl, S. J., editors. Translated by Geoffrey Stevens. The Teaching of the Catholic Church; As Contained in Her Documents. Cork: Mercier Press, 1967.
- Oman, John. Grace and Personality. New York: MacMillan, 1925.
- Otto, Rudolf. The Idea of the Holy. Trans. by John W. Harvey. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958.

- Paterson, Wm. P. The Nature of Religion. New York: George N. Doran Company, 1925.
- Philippus a. Ss. Trinitate, C. D. Summa Theologie Mysticae. Editio Bruxelles, 1874.
- \*Polanyi. Science Faith and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. The Study of Man. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959.
- Pratt, J. B. The Religious Consciousness. New York: Macmillan, 1921.
- Pringle-Pattison, A. Seth. The Idea of God In the Light of Recent Philosophy. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1920.
- Recejac, E. The Bases of the Mystical Knowledge. Translated by Sarah C. Upton. London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1899.
- Reypens, L., S. J. "Ame," Dict. de Spiritualité, cc. 433-469.
- Royce, James E. The World and the Individual (2 vols.) New York: McGraw-Hill, 1912.
- Salamanticenses. Cursus Theologicus. Parisiis: Ed. Palme, 1878-79.
- Santayana, George. Reason and Religion. New York: Scribner's, 1905.
- Scott, W. Major. Aspects of Christian Mysticism. London: John Murray, 1907.
- Sharpe, A. B. Mysticism: Its True Nature and Value. London: Sands & Co., 1910.
- \*Spencer, Sidney. Mysticism in World Religion. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1963.
- Stanton, A. J. Francis. Catholic Mysticism. London: Sands & Co., 1929.
- Stiernotte, Alfred P. Mysticism and the Modern Mind. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1959.

- Stolz, Anselm, O. S. B. The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection. Trans. by A. Williams, O. S. B. London, 1938. Also--St. Louis: Herder, 1938.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Teología de la Mística. Translated by Luis Pelayo Arribas, C. M. F. Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, S. A., 1951.
- Suarez, Franciscus, S. J. Opera Omnia. Tracts: De Gratia and De Oratione. Paris: Ed. Vives, 1856-78.
- Tennant, Frederick R. The Soul and Its Faculties. Cambridge: University Press, 1928.
- \*Underhill, Evelyn. The Essentials of Mysticism. London & Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons. Also New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Golden Sequence. London: Methuen & Co., 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Man and the Supernatural. London: Methuen & Co., 1927.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. The Mystic Way. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1914.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. The Mystics of the Church. London: James Clarke & Co., n. d.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. Mysticism. 4th ed. London: Methuen & Co., 1912.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. Practical Mysticism. London: J. M. Dent, Ltd., 1914.
- \*Vaughan, Robert Alfred. Hours With the Mystics. (2 vols. in one). London: Gibbings & Company, Ltd., 1893. Also London: Strahan & Co., 1879.
- Waddell, F. Hatley. Thoughts on Modern Mysticism. London: Wm. Blackwood & Sons, 1910.
- Waite, Arthur E. Studies in Mysticism. London: Hodder & Stoughton, n. d.
- Webb, Clement Charles Julian. God and Personality. London: G. Allen & Unwin, also New York: MacMillan, 1918.

Zaehner, R. C. Mysticism Sacred and Profane. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.

## 2. The Spiritual Life

\*Arintero, J. D., O. P. Stages in Prayer. Translated by Kathleen Pond. London: Blackfriars Publications, 1947. Also Madrid, 1916.

\*Besse, Ludovic de. The Science of Prayer. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1925.

\_\_\_\_\_. Prayer in Practice. Baltimore: Helicon, 1961.

Diefenbach, G. O. F. M. Cap. Common Mystic Prayer. Paterson: S. Anth., 1946.

Harton, F. P. The Elements of the Spiritual Life. New York: SPCK-- MacMillan Co., 1932.

Hayman, Eric. The Hidden Life of the Body of Christ. London: Faith Press, 1963.

\*Hermann, W. The Communion of the Christian With God. London: Williams & Norgate, 1906.

Lejeune, Abbe P. "Contemplation," Dict. de Théologie Catholique.

\_\_\_\_\_. An Introduction to the Mystical Life. London: R. & T., 1915.

Louismet, S. Divine Contemplation for All. London: Burns & Oates, 1920.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Mystical Life. London: Burns & Oates, 1916.

Mouroux, J. The Christian Experience. London: Sheed, 1954.

Philippe, Paul, O. P. "De Contemplatione Mystica," Typescript from Angelicum in Rome. 3 vols. 1947-50.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Mental Prayer in the Catholic Tradition," Mental Prayer and Modern Life. Kenedy, 1950.

\*Polamyi. Personal Knowledge. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958.

\*Poulain, A., S. J. The Graces of Interior Prayer; A Treatise on Mystical Theology. Translated by Leonora L. Yorke Smith. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1957. Paris, 1922.

\*Robinson, H. Wheeler. The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit. 1928.

Tanqueray, A. The Spiritual Life. Translated from Précis de Théologie Ascétique et Mystique. Tournai, 1932.

Truhlar, Carolus, S. J. De Experientia Mystica. Romae: P. V. Greg., 1951.

Underhill, Evelyn. The Life of the Spirit and the Life of Today. London: Methuen & Co., 1924.

\*Watson, John. The Interpretation of Religious Experience. (2 vols.) Glasgow: J. Maclehose & Sons, 1912.

### 3. Biblical

\*Bouyer, Louis. The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. London: Burns & Oates, 1960.

\*Reid, H. M. B. The Holy Spirit and the Mystics. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1925.

\*Schweitzer, Albert. The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956.

\*Wikenhauser, Alfred. Pauline Mysticism. Freiburg, West Germany: Herder, 1960.

#### 4. Specific Mystics

##### a. St. Teresa of Avila

\*Auclair, Marcelle. Saint Teresa of Avila. Translated by Kathleen Pond. London: Burns Oates, 1953.

\_\_\_\_\_. La Vie de Sainte Thérèse d'Avila. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1950.

Farges, Albert. Mystical Phenomena; A Treatise on Mystical Theology in Agreement With the Principles of St. Teresa. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1926.

\*Peers, Edgar Allison, translator and editor. The Letters of St. Teresa. (2 vols. from critical edition of P. Silverio de St. Teresa, C. D.) London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1951. Also London: Cardinal Books, 1951.

\_\_\_\_\_. Mother of Carmel; A Portrait of St. Teresa of Jesus. London: SCM Press, 1945.

\*Teresa de Jesús, Santa. Complete Works of St. Teresa. Translated and edited by E. A. Peers. Vol. I--General Introduction, Life, Spiritual Relations. Vol. II--Way of Perfection, Interior Castle, Conceptions of the Love of God, Exclamations of the Soul to God. Vol. III--Foundations, Minor Prose Works, Poems, Documents. London: Sheed & Ward, 1957.

\_\_\_\_\_. Obras. Edición breviarío. Contains the Text of the Critical Edition of Silverio, of 1915-1920. Burgos: El Carmelo, 1930.

\*\_\_\_\_\_. Obras Completas. ed. Efrén de la Madre de Dios, O. C. D. y Otger Steggink, O. Carm. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1962.

\*\_\_\_\_\_. The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila. Translated by J. M. Cohen. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1958.

Vasserot, Teodoro. Saint T rese et le D veloppement de sa Th ologie Mystique. Vaud, Bellinzone: Ern. Colombi et C., 1904.

b. Other Specific Mystics

\*Bettoni, Efrem, O. F. M. Duns Scotus: The Basic Principles of His Philosophy. Translated and edited by Bernardine Bonansea, O. F. M. Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1961.

\*Campbell, James M. Paul the Mystic. London: Andrew Melrose, 1907.

Cecilia del Nacimiento. Tratado de la Transformaci n del Alma en Dios. Contained in 3rd Vol. of Toledo edition of St. John of the Cross.

\_\_\_\_\_. Tratado de la Uni n del Alma con Dios. In 3rd vol. of Toledo edition of Works of John of the Cross.

Gardener, Edmund G. Dante and the Mystics. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1913.

\*Gilson, Etienne. The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard. Translated by A. H. C. Downes. London: Sheed and Ward, 1955. Paris, 1934.

Hieronymus a Matre Dei (Gratianus). Obras. Edition of Silverio de Santa Teresa. 3 vols. Burgos: El Carmelo, 1932-33.

\*Morison, James Cotter. The Life and Times of Saint Bernard. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1901.

\*Jones, Rufus Matthew. Some Exponents of Mystical Religion. New York: Abingdon Press, 1930.

\*Maeterlinck, M. Translated by Jane Stoddart. Ruysbroeck and the Mystics. 1894.

\*Mir, Don Miguel. Escritores M sticos Espa oles. Tom. I. Madrid: Casa Editorial Bailly y Baillere, 1911.

Richard of St. Victor. Selected Writings on Contemplation of Richard of St. Victor. Translated by Clare Kirchberger. London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1957.

Vallgornera, Thomas A. Mystica Theologia Divi Thomae. 2 vols. Turin: 1924. ed. 4a.

### 5. Historical

\*Eucken, Rudolf. Main Currents of Modern Thought, 1912.

\*Gall, Edward. Mysticism Throughout the Ages. London: Rider & Company, n. d.

Joret, F., O. P. La Contemplation Mystique d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin. Lille, 1924.

\*Maloney, Samuel Dow. "An Investigation Into the Relationship Between Mysticism and Reformed Theology." Unpublished Master's Dissertation, Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, 1952. 283 pp.

Pond, Kathleen. The Spirit of the Spanish Mystics. London: Burns & Oates, 1958.

### 6. Comparative

Abelson, J. Jewish Mysticism. London: G. Bell & Sons, 1913.

\*Arseniew, Nicholas. Translated by Arthur Chambers. Mysticism and the Eastern Church. London: SCM, 1926.

Lehmann, E. Mysticism in Heathendom and Christendom. Translated by G. M. Hunt. London: Luzac and Co., 1910.

Lossky, Vladimir. Théologie Mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient. Aubier: Editions Montaigne, 1944.

Mondin, Battista. The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963.



- \*Nicholson, Reynold. The Mystics of Islam. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1914.
- \*Otto, Rudolf. Mysticism East and West. Translated by Bertha L. Bracey and Richenda C. Payne. New York: Meridian Books, 1959.
- \*Petry, Ray C., ed. Late Medieval Mysticism. Vol. XIII of series Library of Christian Classics. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957.
- \*Spencer, Sidney. Mysticism in World Religion. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1963.

## VI. STUDIES IN OTHER RELATED FIELDS

### 1. Historical

- \*Cyprian, Epistle 67 (Vol. V, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, editors, The Ante Nicene Fathers. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899). 699 pp.
- \*García, C. Araujo and Grubb, Kenneth G. Religion in the Republic of Spain. London: World Dominion Press, 1933.
- \*Irenaeus, Against Heresies; 1:10:2 (Vol. I, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, editors, The Ante Nicene Fathers; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899). 331 pp.
- \*Kamen, Henry. The Spanish Inquisition. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965.
- \*Longhurst, John E. Erasmus and the Spanish Inquisition: The Case of Juan de Valdés. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1950.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. Luther and the Spanish Inquisition: The Case of Diego de Uceda 1528-1529. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1953.

- \*Mackay, John A. The Other Spanish Christ, A Study in the Spiritual History of Spain and South America. New York: MacMillan Co., 1933.
- \*Marique, Joseph M. F., S. J. Leaders of Iberian Christianity 50-650 A. D. Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1962.
- \*McCrie, Thomas. History of the Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Spain in the Sixteenth Century. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1842.
- \*Neve, J. L. A History of Christian Thought. Vol. I--History of Christian Doctrine. Vol. II--History of Protestant Theology. Philadelphia, Pa.: The Muhlenberg Press, 1946.
- \*Parry, J. H. The Spanish Seaborne Empire. London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1966.
- \*Plaidy, Jean. The Spanish Inquisition, Its Rise, Growth and End. New York: The Citadel Press, 1967.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. The Growth of the Spanish Inquisition. London: Robt. Hale, Ltd., 1960.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. The Rise of the Spanish Inquisition. London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1959.
- \*Richardson, Cyril C., translator and editor. Early Christian Fathers. Vol. I in Series: "The Library of Christian Classics." Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953.
- \*Rule, John C., and Te Paske, John J., editors. The Character of Philip II--The Problem of Moral Judgments in History. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1963.
- \*Seeberg, Reinhold. Textbook of the History of Doctrines. Translated by Charles E. Hay. Vol. I--History of Doctrines in the Ancient Church. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1956.
- \*Spinka, Matthew, ed. Advocates of Reform from Wyclif to Erasmus. Vol. XIV in series: "The Library of Christian Classics." Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953.

\*Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, Chap. VII (Vol. III, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, editors, The Ante Nicene Fathers; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), 745 pp.

\*Williams, George Huntston and Mergal, Angel M., editors. Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers. Vol. XXV of series "Library of Christian Classics." Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957.

## 2. Theological

\*Anselm, Saint, Monologion. Opera Omnia, Vol. I. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946. 290 pp.

\*\_\_\_\_\_. Prologium; Monologium; An Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo (Trans. by Sidney Norton Deane). Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1930. 288 pp.

\*Aquinas, St. Thomas. The "Summa Theologica" (translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province). London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1927. Part II, 539 pp.

\*St. Thomas Aquinas: Philosophical Texts. Selected and Translated with notes and an Introduction by Thomas Gilby. London: Oxford University Press, 1951. 405 pp.

\*Barth, Karl. Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum (Trans. by Ian W. Robertson). Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1960. 171 pp.

\*\_\_\_\_\_. Church Dogmatics. eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961. 11 vol.

\*\_\_\_\_\_. The Doctrine of the Word of God. Vol. I, 575 pp., Church Dogmatics, 12 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955.

\*Berdyayev, Nicolas. Truth and Revelation. (Translated from the Russian by R. M. French). London: Geoffrey Bles, 1953.

\*Brunner, Emil. Man in Revolt. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947.

- \*Burleigh, John H. S., translator and editor. Augustine: Earlier Writings. Vol. VI of series: "Library of Christian Classics." Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953.
- \*Burnaby, John, translator and editor. Augustine: Later Works. Vol. VIII of series: "Library of Christian Classics." Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955.
- \*Calvin, John. Institutes of the Christian Religion. Translated by Henry Beveridge. London: James Clarke & Co., 1962. 2 vols.
- \*Chadwick, Owen, translator and editor. Western Asceticism. Vol. XII of series "Library of Christian Classics." Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958.
- \*Copleston, F. C. Aquinas. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965.
- \*D'Arcy, M. C., S. J., et al. A Monument to Saint Augustine. London: Sheed & Ward, 1945. 367 pp.
- \*Davis, Charles, editor. English Spiritual Writers from Aelfric of Eynsham to Ronald Knox. London: Burns & Oates, 1961.
- \*Fairweather, Eugene R., translator and editor. A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham. Vol. X of series: "Library of Christian Classics." Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956.
- \*Johnson, F. Ernest, Religious Symbolism. Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1969. 263 pp.
- \*Lossky, Vladimir. The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church. London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1957. 251 pp.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. The Vision of God. (Trans. by Asheleigh Moorhouse.) Clayton, Wisconsin: American Orthodox Press, 1963. 139 pp.
- \*Mascall, E. L. Christ, the Christian, and the Church. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1946. 257 pp.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. Christian Theology and Natural Science. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956.

- \* \_\_\_\_\_ . The Christian Universe. New York: Morehouse-Barlow Co., 1966.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_ . Words and Images. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957.
- \*Cutler, Albert C., translator and editor. Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion. Vol. VII of series: "Library of Christian Classics." Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955.
- \*Owen, H. P. The Christian Knowledge of God. London: The Athlone Press, 1969. 341 pp.
- \*Quinton, Gertrude E. Scientific and Religious Knowledge. London: SCM Press, 1950.
- \*Reid, J. K. S., translator and editor. Calvin: Theological Treatises. Vol. XXII of series: "Library of Christian Classics." Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954.
- \*Thomas a Kempis. The Imitation of Christ. Translated by C. Bigg. London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1954.
- \*Thomas Aquinas, Saint. ed., the Very Reverend Friar Hugh Pope, O. P. On Prayer and the Contemplative Life. Burnes, Oates & Washbourne.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Summa Theologica and III in Sententiis.
- Tillich, Paul. Systematic Theology. 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951. 921 pp.
- \*Torrance, Thomas F. Theological Science. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_ . Theology in Reconstruction. London: SCM Press, 1965.
- \*Trethowan, Iltyd, O. S. B. The Basis of Belief. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961. 142 pp.
- \*Weigel, Gustave, S. J., and Arthur G. Madden. Knowledge: Its Values and Limits. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961.

### 3. Philosophical

- Baillie, John. The Roots of Religion in the Human Soul. New York: George H. Doran Co., 1926.
- Balfour, Arthur James. The Foundations of Belief. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902.
- Bennett, Charles A. A Philosophical Study of Mysticism. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953.
- Brown, William. Mind and Personality. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927.
- Caird, John. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion. Glasgow: J. Maclehose & Sons, 1901.
- \*The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy. Edited by Arthur Hilary Armstrong. Cambridge: University Press, 1967.
- \*Copleston, Frederick, S. J. A History of Philosophy. Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1964.
- Vol. I. -- Greece and Rome
- Vol. II. -- Mediaeval Philosophy
- Vol. III. -- Late Mediaeval and Renaissance Philosophy
- Vol. IV. -- Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Leibniz
- Vol. V. -- The British Philosophers
- Vol. VI. -- Modern Philosophy
- DuPres, Carl. The Philosophy of Mysticism. 2 vols. London: George Redway, 1889.
- \*Duns Scotus. Philosophical Writings. Edited and translated by Allan Wolter, O. F. M. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962.
- Galloway, George. The Philosophy of Religion. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914.

- \*Harris, C. R. S. Duns Scotus. Vol. I--The Place of Duns Scotus in Medieval Thought. Vol. II--The Philosophical Doctrines of Duns Scotus. New York: The Humanities Press, 1959.
- \*Hocking, W. E. Types of Philosophy. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939.
- \*Hughes, Thomas N. The Philosophic Basis of Mysticism. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937.
- Knudson, Albert C. The Philosophy of Personalism. New York: Abingdon Press, 1927.
- Perry, Ralph Barton. Present Philosophical Tendencies. New York: Longman's, Green & Co., 1912.
- Rashdall, Hastings. Philosophy and Religion. London: Duckworth & Co., 1914.
- Watkin, Edward Ingram. The Philosophy of Mysticism. London: Grant Richards, Ltd., n. d.
- Wolter, Allan, O. F. M. Duns Scotus; Philosophical Writings. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962.

#### 4. Psychological

- Ames, Edward S. The Psychology of Religious Experience. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1910.
- Birmingham, William, and Joseph E. Cunneen, editors. Cross Currents of Psychiatry and Catholic Morality. New York: Pantheon Books, 1964.
- Delacroix, Henri. Etudes d'Histoire de la Psychologie du Mysticisme. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1908.
- Howley, John F. Psychology and Mystical Experience. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.; also St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder Book Co., 1920.

- \*Inge, W. R. Faith and Its Psychology. New York: Scribner's, 1915.
- Jung, Carl Gustav. Psychology of the Unconscious. Translated by B. M. Hinkle. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1925.
- Leuba, James H. A Psychological Study of Religion. New York: Macmillan, 1912.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Psychology of Religious Mysticism. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1925.
- Selbie, Wm. Boothby. The Psychology of Religion. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924.
- Starbuck, Edwin D. The Psychology of Religion. London: W. Scott. Also New York: Scribner's, 1903.
- Tansley, Arthur George. The New Psychology and Its Relation to Life. London: G. Allen & Unwin. Also, New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1922.
- Thouless, Robert Henry. An Introduction to the Psychology. 2nd ed. Cambridge: University Press, 1950.

## VII. REFERENCE WORKS

### 1. Concordances

- \*Luis de San José, Fr., O. C. D. Concordancias de las Obras y Escritos del Doctor de la Iglesia San Juan de la Cruz. Burgos: Tipografía de "El Monte Carmelo," 1948.
- Lucinio, del SS. Sacramento. Indice Bíblico en Vida y Obras Completas de San Juan de la Cruz. 5a ed. Madrid: BAC, 1964.



## 2. Dictionaries

- \*Neilson, William Allan, Thomas A. Knott, and Paul W. Carhart, editors. Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language. 2nd Edition, Unabridged. Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1952. 5 volumes.
- \*Peers, Edgar Allison, José V. Barragan, Francesco A. Vinyals, and Jorge Arturo Mora, editors. Cassell's Spanish Dictionary. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1966.

## 3. Encyclopedias

- \*Encyclopaedia Britannica. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1954. 24 vols.
- \*New Catholic Encyclopedia. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966.
- \*The World Book Encyclopedia. Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corp., 1964.

## 4. Form Manuals

- Campbell, William Giles. A Form Book for Thesis Writing. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1939.
- Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

## VIII. RELATED PERIODICAL STUDIES

- Ahern, B. M. "The Use of Scripture in the Spanish Theology of St. John of the Cross," Catholic Bib. Quarterly, 14 (1952), 6-17.

- Alonso, J. M. "Biblia y Mística en San Juan de la Cruz," Rev. Espiritual, 9 (1950), 18-40.
- \*Arintero, Juan, O. P. "Influencia de Santo Tomás en la Mística de San Juan de la Cruz y Santa Teresa," Vida Sobrenatural, VIII (1924), 21-42.
- Bernadot, V., O. P. "Sa Vie Contemplative," La Vie Spirituelle (May, 1924), 119. Article on Divine Union in the life of St. Thérèse of Lisieux.
- Borchert, Bruno, O. C. "Spiritual Friendship," Carmel in the World, 5 (1965), 252-259.
- Brenan, Gerald. "Studies in Genius--II: St. John of the Cross, His Life and Poetry," Horizon, Vol. XV, No. 89 (June, 1947), 324-356.
- Burell, D., O. S. C. Article in Spiritual Life, 9 (1963), 20-23.
- Butler, B. C., O. S. B. "Mystical Prayer," Clergy Review, 38 (1953), 450-464.
- Chevallier, Dom Ph. "La Doctrine Ascétique de S. Jean de la Croix," La Vie Spirituelle, XVI (1927), 175 ff.
- Colunga, A. "San Juan de la Cruz Interprete de la S. Escrituras," Ciencia Tom, 63 (1952), 257-276.
- Coreth, E., S. J. "In Actione Contemplativus," Zeit. f. Kath. Theol., 76 (1954:1), 55-82.
- Danielou, J. "Ignatian Vision of the Universe and Man," Cross Currents, 4 (1954), 357-366.
- Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite. Noms Divins et Theologie Mystique. (Critical text in French by P. G. Thery, O. P., in the Etudes Dionysiennes, Vol. II, Paris, 1937.
- Furnet, S. "Saint Jean de la Croix et la Bible," Vie Spirituelle, 69 (1942), 11-27.

- Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, C. D. "Le Double Mode des Dons du S. Esprit," Etudes Carmelitaines, (October, 1934).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Les Sommets de la Vie d'Amour," Angelicum, XIV (1937).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "L'Union Transformante," La Vie Spirituelle, XVI (1926-27), 223.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "L'Union de Transformation," La Vie Spirituelle, XII (1924-25), 127.
- García, F. "San Juan de la Cruz y la Biblia," Rev. Espir., 1 (1941-42), 372-388.
- Gardiel, A., O. P. "L'expérience Mystique dans le Cadre des Missions Divines," La Vie Spirituelle, June-October, 1932.
- Groult, Abbe. "S. Jean de la Croix," Nouvelle Rev. Théologique (Dec., 1927), 561-591.
- Guibert, J. de, S. J. "Les Dons du Saint-Esprit: La Question Théologique," Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique, 1933, pp. 3-26.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Dons du Saint-Esprit et la Vie Mystique," Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique, 1923, pp. 321-344.
- \*Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, C. D. (Americanus) "Mystical Theology of St. John of the Cross," The Homiletic and Pastoral Review. Tome 28, pp. 131, 254, 374, 488, 607, 745, 850, 948, 1062.
- Labourdette, M., O. P. "La Foi Théologique et la Connaissance Mystique d'Après S. Jean de la Croix," Revue Thomiste (1936), 593-629; (1937), 16-57; 191-230.
- Lebreton, J. "La Nuit Obscure d'Après S. Jean de la Croix," Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique (Jan., 1928), 3-24.
- Leonard, A. "Phenomenal Introduction to Catholic Mysticism," Cross Currents (1935), 310.
- Lucien Marie de Saint Joseph, O. C. D. "A la Recherche d'une Structure Essentielle de la Nuit de l'Esprit," Etudes Carmelitaines (Oct., 1938), 254-281.

- Marie-Joseph du Sacre-Coeur, C. D. "La Contemplation Acquisse Est Enseignée a leurs Disciples par S. Jean de la Croix et S. Thérèse," Etudes Carmelitaines, X (1925), 61-109.
- Mariner, Bigorra S. "Huellas de la Vulgata en la Poesía de San Juan de la Cruz," Miscelanea de Estudios Arabes y Hebraicos, Universidad de Granada, 7 (1958), 24-44.
- Maritain, Jacques. "Saint Jean de la Croix, Practicien de la Contemplation," Etudes Carmelitaines (April, 1931), 62-109.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sur l'Égalité d'Amour entre Dieu et l'Âme," Etudes Carmelitaines (April, 1932), 1-18.
- Miguel Angel Diaz de S. Teresa, Fr., O. C. D. "La 'Reentrega' de Amor," Ephemerides Carmeliticae, Roma. XIII (1962), 299-352.
- Mooney, C. F., S. J. "Ignatian Spirituality and Modern Theology," Downside Review, 80 (1962), 333-366.
- Nicolaus, A. Jesu Maria, C. D. French translation by Cyprien de la Nativité, C. D. in Etudes Carmelitaines (1911-1914).
- Pichery, E., O. S. B. "La Charité et le Progres dans la Connaissance de Dieu," La Vie Spirituelle, 15 (1927), 415-449.
- Pourrat, P. La Spiritualité Chrétienne. Vol. III. Paris, 1925.
- Richstatter, K. "Der Kirchenlehrer der Mystik," Stimmer der Zeit, June, 1930.
- Robilliard, J. A., O. P. "An Introduction to the 'Interior Castle,'" Cross and Crown (Dec., 1961), 438-453.
- Rozwadowski, S. J. "La Mystique du Cantique Spirituel," La Vie Spirituelle (Jan., 1936), 1-28.
- \*Torrance, T. F., "Scientific Hermeneutics According to St. Thomas Aquinas," The Journal of Theological Studies, XIII (October, 1962), 259-289.

Travert, Paul Abbe. "Sainte Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus. Sa Simplicité Mystique," Études et Documents Thérésiens (January, 1935).

Vie Spirituelle, La. Numerous articles dedicated to the doctrine of Saint Jean de la Croix. Cf. Index, 1933. Also, May, 1927-- Special issue on Jean de la Croix. Articles by Garrigou-Lagrange, Dom Chevallier, Marie-Eugène de l'Enfant Jésus, Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, and C. A.

\*Watkin, E. I. "Mysticism," Spiritual Life, 5 (1959), 6-21.

Wild, Karl. "Das Wesen der Mystischen Beschauung nach dem hl. Johannes vom Kreuz," Zeitschrift für Askese und Mystik (1934), 107.