

DESOLATION AS DARK NIGHT

The Transformative Influence of Wisdom in John of the Cross

By CONSTANCE FITZGERALD

THE INTENSE INTEREST OVER THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS in John of the Cross' Dark Night is certainly part of a much larger retrieval in contemporary theology of the mystical tradition and the classic spiritual texts of the past. More importantly, the current awareness of darkness and the affinity of so many for the dark night experience seem to be a sign of the rebirth and more public valuing of the experience of God in contemplative prayer. There is little doubt, moreover, that over the past twenty years the creative work of the Jesuits in reinterpreting and making available Ignatian prayer, particularly through the medium of the Exercises and directed retreats, has made a significant contribution to this movement toward contemplative prayer in people's lives. This may be why we are now witnessing an intersection of Ignatian and Carmelite spirituality at the present time, an intersection related to darkness. This may be why some people, practised in Ignatian prayer and yet faced with the bewildering experience of darkness, dryness and loss of meaning in their own lives or in the lives of those they guide, find helpful the Dark Night teaching of John of the Cross. For John writes of a critical, contemplative phase of spiritual growth easily misunderstood and not specifically treated by Ignatius.

This intersection or complementarity of Ignatian and Carmelite spirituality reaches back to sixteenth century Spain when young Jesuits from Ignatius' newly founded Society of Jesus provided spiritual direction for Teresa of Avila as she attempted not only to understand her own disturbing mystical graces but also to reform the ancient Carmelite Order. Thomas H. Green, a loyal son of Ignatius, stands, therefore, within a long history of mutuality and respect when, in his second book on prayer, he turns to John of the Cross and Teresa to provide guidance on 'prayer beyond the beginnings'. For Green, John of the Cross'

read more at www.theway.org.uk

discussion on the Dark Night 'is one of the most important passages in the whole literature of prayer'.¹

In this article, I hope to extend contemporary interpretation of the Dark Night in John of the Cross in two ways: first, by examining the transformative and subversive role of Wisdom (Sophia) in the Dark Night, which is a specifically Christological emphasis suggested by contemporary feminist theologians;² and second, by bringing out the meaning of the deeper experience of darkness, called by John of the Cross the Dark Night of the spirit.

Wisdom in John of the Cross

John moves in the milieu of Wisdom from the beginning of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* to the end of the *Living flame of love*.³ An analysis of his major writings reveals that he is radically influenced by the Wisdom texts of pre-Christian Judaism. Particularly important for John in defining who Sophia is and what she does are the books of Wisdom (ch 7–9) and Proverbs (ch 8). Out of his own distinctive configuration of this Jewish wisdom literature emerge some of the most basic principles of his teaching. It fashions John's understanding of who Jesus is, who God is and how this God functions in the dynamic of human transformation. It suggests the place of Sophia in human suffering and hints at how the beloved of Sophia functions in the world.

It is clear that for John of the Cross, as for St Paul and the writers of the Gospels of John and Matthew, Jesus Christ is divine Wisdom (Sophia), the Word, the Son of God. In the unitive experience of Jesus-Sophia the person is transformed, and in this Jesus the entire creation is gathered into the tender, unifying embrace of Sophia-God, who pervades and connects the entire cosmos and every form of life in it.

This means that John of the Cross appropriates not only pre-Christian Judaism's understanding of a feminine gestalt of God, Sophia, but he seems to be completely at home with the identification made by New Testament writers of Jesus as Divine Sophia: *Jesus is Sophia incarnate*. To underpin his own cohesive Christology John uses most of the significant New Testament Wisdom texts and he does this in a context that frequently reveals his knowledge of their connection with the Wisdom texts of pre-Christian Judaism. The tradition of personified Wisdom which played a foundational role in the development of Christology in the early Church seems to have been singularly important to him, since some of his most profound christological assertions are couched in its terms. The recognition of the central, critical function of Wisdom is therefore basic to an understanding of John's

Christology. Furthermore, to explore the subversive and transformative function of Sophia in the Dark Night is to probe the role of Jesus Christ in the process of transformation.

The role of Jesus Christ

In John's anthropology the human person is seen as an infinite capacity for God. As long as the great 'caverns' of the mind, heart, memory and imagination are filled with human knowledge, loves, dreams and memories that seem or promise to satisfy completely, the person is unable to feel even or imagine the depths of the capacity that is there. Only when we become aware of our emptiness, in the face of the experience of the fragility and breakdown of what or whom we have staked our lives on, the limitation and failure of our life project and life love, the shattering of our dreams and meanings, can the depths of thirst and hunger that exist in the human person, the infinite capacity, really be felt (LF 3.19–22).⁴

Few people understand that John is actually addressing this infinite capacity when he urges them at the end of the first book of the *Ascent* to have an on-going desire to pattern their lives on Christ's.

Have habitual desire to imitate Christ in all your deeds by bringing your life into conformity with his. You must then study his life in order to know how to imitate him and behave in all things as he would behave. (IA 13.3)⁵

This means only one thing: desire to know Jesus Christ. Human desire is educated by an immersion in the Jesus of the Gospels. However, if you channel your desire toward knowing Jesus Christ, the one you will learn to know is loving Sophia who will slowly and secretly redirect and claim your desire and subvert your life. Desire is educated, therefore, by the companionship, the friendship, of Jesus-Sophia. This dynamic underlies John's whole philosophy of prayer and indicates how a conscious decision of the heart for Christ takes place, how a shift in the focus of desire and meaning begins in our lives.

But often the human person is not satisfied with the day-to-day fidelity to this companionship, nor with its slow, unpretentious, mysterious development. Too many people educated in our culture live with a consuming desire for novelty, excitement, change, new pleasures and extraordinary experiences. But John, appropriating both St Paul and the Book of Wisdom in one of his most famous christological passages, affirms that we do not need unusual new revelations, visions or secret truths (IIA 22.5–7). We have everything we desire in the gospel and the

unitive companionship of the human Jesus, in whom dwells for us the nearness and fullness, the compassionate kindness, of Sophia-God embracing and energizing from within the totality of the human situation.

In stressing the complete sufficiency and unlimited potential of Christ as divine Sophia, John of the Cross validates new possibilities for appropriating the inexhaustible meaning of Jesus. What will we unlock if *in prayer* we experience the life of Jesus in the light of Sophia, thereby transforming for our time the symbol of Christ and reclaiming Christ and christological doctrine in a new way?²⁶

Fasten your eyes on him alone, because in him I have spoken and revealed all, and in him you will discover even more that you ask for and desire . . . For he is my entire locution and response, vision and revelation, which I have already spoken . . . to you . . . (IIA 22)

Image of Jesus Christ and growth in wisdom

It is in this walking with the human Jesus that Sophia becomes a life-giving, indwelling image and one's primary focus of affective and cognitive meaning. This image is unique for each person, forming a basis for relationship, direction, love, purification and transformation. In fact, a gradual transference of desire occurs as the presence of loving Sophia takes shape within, influencing motivation and affecting imagination.

A principle fundamental to John's wisdom Christology is operative here: love will never reach the fullness of its possibilities, human desire will never stop yearning and aching, until the lovers are so alike that one is transfigured in the love and goodness of the other. This means that a transforming image of Jesus-Sophia is, in a way totally harmonious with human development, gradually etched within the human personality. As I know Jesus-Sophia, this knowledge subverts my life, shows me to myself as in a mirror and redirects and purifies my desire.

If I look long enough at one who truly loves me, I become what I see in the other's eyes. I am transfigured. The image of the loved one, the eyes of the beloved, are burnt into my heart and seen with my inner eye. We see this with remarkable clarity in the Spiritual Canticle poem:

Reveal your presence,
And may the vision of your beauty be my death;
For the sickness of love
Is not cured
Except by *your very presence and image.*

O spring like crystal!
 If only, on your silvered over face,
 You would suddenly form
 The eyes I have desired,
 Which I bear sketched deep within my heart. (SC st 11–12)

The soul experiences within herself a certain sketch of love . . . and she desires the completion of the sketch of this image, the image of her Bridegroom, the Word, the Son of God, who as St Paul says, 'is the splendor of [God's] glory and the image of [God's] substance,' (Heb. 1.3) for this is the image into which the soul desires to be transformed through love. (SC 11.11–12)

Because this is a fundamental experience for John, and not just a concept, it is important to understand the developmental and transformative function of this Wisdom image. Through it the whole creative aspect of Old Testament Sophia is brought to human transformation. If it is not valued relative to spiritual growth, the tender, careful, nurturing creativity of Sophia will be thwarted and we will 'damage or lose the sublime image that God [is] painting within [us]'.⁷

At first the developing image of Jesus-Sophia is a strength and consolation motivating one toward a generous, self-giving life influenced by the Jesus of the Gospels and sensitizing one to this Sophia presence in the world that energizes and connects all of reality.⁸ As the intimacy with Christ matures, however, this image, within and without, begins to make deeper claims and there is a shift in the way Sophia operates within the depths of human personality.

Dark Night and the continuing role of Sophia

In time the presence of Sophia becomes afflictive. The image becomes too threatening. Jesus-Sophia subverts my own self-image and this marks the first aspect of subversion. I cannot accept the claims of Sophia upon me nor can I accept Wisdom as a life-vision in an unconditional commitment; Sophia is too revolutionary and seditious. Sophia turns life upside-down, challenges my most deeply held beliefs and values, undermines what I have learned, claims whom and what I possess, and highlights the limitations and oppressive character of what I depend on most for satisfaction and assurance.

This brings us to the relationship between the Dark Night and the presence of loving Wisdom.⁹ John says very explicitly that Dark Night, infused contemplation, *is* the loving Wisdom of God.¹⁰ It follows that if Jesus Christ *is* Divine Wisdom, Sophia, then *dark contemplation is the presence of Jesus Christ as Wisdom* and Dark Night is the time when the

image of Jesus-Sophia takes on all the marks of crucifixion: suffering, isolation, failure, marginality, rejection, abandonment, hopelessness, meaninglessness, death. The image of the Crucified One, reflective of a seemingly silent, incomprehensible God, functions in the Dark Night as incomprehensible, secret, hidden and yet loving Wisdom-Sophia.¹¹ And this is the second aspect of subversion: not only has my self-image been subverted but now too the images of Christ and God. Therefore when John says that the Dark Night is an inflow of God, this inflow is of a God imparting a secret Wisdom who is Jesus Crucified, a secret, unitive, loving knowledge indicative of more intimate relationship (IDN 10.6). Dark Night is not primarily *some thing*, an impersonal darkness like a difficult situation or distressful psychological condition, but *someone*, a presence leaving an indelible imprint on the human spirit and consequently on one's entire life.

This image is the touch of God's hand marking, wounding, challenging, shaping, purifying and transforming human personality (LF 2.16). In the mirror of this broken, ambiguous image of suffering Wisdom, we see the miseries and hypocrisies of our lives. This crucified image is the living knowledge of human darkness, limitation, oppression and sinfulness which overpowers our shallow self-confidence, questions what we think we know about God, raises doubts about what we have accomplished and undercuts our entire affective life. In fact, this image subverts our whole individualistic perception of reality, that is, the way we experience not only other people, but also other species, the earth and even the cosmos. It is the language of God (Word) inviting and teaching the human mind and heart, calling us in our confusion and emptiness to pass over into the perspective of loving Sophia by an identification with Jesus Crucified.

It is at this point in development that the images of the poor, the oppressed, the exploited, the suffering, take on an overpowering clarity and significance. They are clearly a suffering extension of the inner image of Jesus-Sophia, and they make a claim. They are the darkness of humanity; they are *our* darkness. Just as the personal unconscious is revealed in the mirror of suffering Sophia, so too is the collective darkness, the shadow of humanity. The 'poor' are recognized and embraced to the degree that the identification with suffering Sophia has taken place in our inner darkness. Thus Sophia, having subverted our images of ourselves and of God, now subverts our understanding of the world. This is the third aspect of subversion. In the secret, painful, unitive relationship with dark Sophia, a new participatory love-fired knowledge begins to take over human desire and consciousness and to

express itself not only in the gradual repudiation of all kinds of personal and socio-cultural violence and oppression but also in an entry, albeit dark and unfinished, into the experience of mutuality, communion, connectedness and kinship with the earth that marks transformed or mystical consciousness.

Richard Tarnas suggests that a 'participatory epistemology' that moves beyond the hierarchical dualism characteristic of the Cartesian-Kantian paradigm has been emerging in philosophy for over a century. Common to all its thinkers is an essential conviction that the relation of the human mind to the universe is ultimately not dualistic but participatory.¹² This participatory way of knowing reveals itself in the new paradigm proposed by Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme and many others. They challenge humanity to accept the limitation and death that will usher in the next evolutionary era, when the universe will be experienced not as a collection of objects for human use and mastery but rather as an intimate, interconnected and diverse communion of subjects.¹³

Integral to and one with this participatory way of knowing and understanding life on earth is the tremendous emergent power of the feminine in our culture. It arises out of the unitive energies at work in the universe and heralds the end of the fundamental masculine dominance of the western mind. It appears that we are truly at a highly critical stage of transformation in which the masculine (in all of us) must voluntarily transcend itself in its own dark night of death. This transformation will fit it to enter into a fundamentally new relationship of mutuality with the feminine in all its forms.

We observe in the last years of the twentieth century a massive breakdown of numerous structures, suggestive of the necessary deconstruction or death prior to new birth. We see this participatory vision break through on so many levels, in so many disciplines that it appears reflective of a deeper, powerful archetypal process impelled by forces beyond the merely human. This is where the experience of Crucified Sophia intersects and resonates with the current state of the collective psyche. The unitive relationship with Suffering Sophia can be so deep and, consequently, the solidarity with 'the other' so profound, that not only does the person in this Dark Night carry and bring to consciousness the collective longings of humanity and energies of the cosmos, but brings to them in her very being this participatory, love-fired knowledge which Jesus-Sophia both gives and is. This contribution of mysticism to a broader transformation must not be overlooked by ecologists, creationists, geologists, scientists or philosophers.

Neither may we forget that this is the time to seek not the consolation and escape of other images or practices or relationships but 'the living image of Christ Crucified within' (IIIA 35.5) and to stand open to this transforming imprint of suffering Sophia, which is actually experienced as 'no image' but which nonetheless acknowledges, reflects and even accepts our personal and societal darkness. This is the blackest time of night when the last delicate shading of the image of Christ, crucified and abandoned, is being sketched within the human heart in total darkness and silence.

Purification of spirit

When the invisible, mute God of an abandoned Jesus seems to draw us into lonely introspection where prayer and relationships, as we have known them, are painful or gone; when loss, failure and hopelessness loom large; when all supports drop from one's consciousness and life's deepest meanings and symbol systems are empty and stale; when our inherited language and images no longer reveal the divine, then a dark Wisdom is operative, nurturing the human person with love and confirming values little prized in our society. John throws a stark light on the experience by showing *the whole person* deprived totally in her or his imaginative powers, intellectual intuitions and human sensitivities:

God divests the faculties, affections and senses, both spiritual and sensory, interior and exterior. 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 enjoyed from spiritual blessings . . . *For this privation is one of the conditions required that the spiritual form, [the image] which is the union of love, may be introduced into the spirit and united with it.* The Lord works all this in the soul by means of a pure and dark contemplation. (IIDN 3.3)

If in earlier times the Dark Night wove its way in and out of life bringing dryness, boredom and absence of satisfaction, this darker Night removes the very support systems that have structured our lives, given them meaning and value, and provided a source of affirmation and final assurance.¹⁴

But what precisely can John mean when he says the intellect is emptied and left in darkness? Perhaps he warns us that the time will come when our philosophy of life, our theology and our carefully constructed meanings fall apart before our eyes. All we have accumulated intellectually that has given us 'God', 'faith' and security loses its significance.

Nothing makes any sense. The mind, while *full* on one level of a lifetime of knowledge, is in total darkness on another, the level of meaning. We feel as if we have been duped, and succumb to silence, afraid to shock others by the depth of our cynicism and unbelief.¹⁵

Our minds stumble over the concept of emptiness in the memory because we know that human memory is full of experience. But now the imagination can no longer connect life's memories to create meaning and hope. We can speak of emptiness in the memory, not because one remembers nothing, but because all that the memory holds which once provided motivation and security, which engendered trust and promise for the future, seems now an illusion and a mockery. Memories do not mean what one thought they did. The memory is indeed empty, possessing nothing but the scattered remains of cherished experiences and the crushing remembrance of personal failure and defeat (IIDN 5.5–6).

This kind of clarity about one's miseries generates the overwhelming feeling of being rejected and abandoned not only by one's friends but particularly by God. In fact, abandonment and the betrayal of trust are the hallmarks of this dark experience. However it happens, what or whom one cherishes most in life is cut off, taken away. The worst thing about this 'purification of the will' is that the loved one, the very focus of one's love and desire, becomes the cause of one's agony.¹⁶ There is nothing so destructive of affirmation and worth as rejection by one who has loved you and on whom you have counted with complete assurance. It leaves one unable to grasp anything affectively. The destruction of mutuality, with its deep frustration of desire, leaves one without any strength of purpose, bereft of motivation and prone to bitterness. A transcendence in which one is not at home and against which one rebels is forced upon the person.

Alternative vision: faith, hope and love

We face a challenge in this night to throw into gear the kind of radical faith, hope and love that can endure the death-dealing 'touch of God's hand', the imprint, which is emptying out our isolated self-sufficiency, on the one hand, and our unfree dependence and fear of transformation and evolution on the other. Activated by Sophia's dark presence, the theological virtues are our only option, presenting a very uncomfortable alternative vision. Because initially we do not feel faith, hope and love, maintaining this basic contemplative posture in our prayer and life is extremely difficult. It must overcome an anger, fear and rebellion that want to refuse these theological gifts rather than be

left with 'nothing'. Yet the only way the deprivation of the Dark Night will open into a radical change of consciousness and affectivity is by the acceptance of this contemplative posture or vision whereby one actually passes over to the love perspective of Divine Wisdom (IIA 6.6, IIDN 21.11–12).

Faith, however, causes darkness in our very power to understand. Now it is at cross purposes with our ability to make logical sense out of life, death or eternity. When Jesus Christ recedes from consciousness, it is faith that moves us into the Mystery which is unimaginable, incomprehensible and uncontrollable. While we do not set out to empty the mind, imagination or memory, prayer development and life exacts this of us and then faith becomes an opening into a realm of significance far beyond human understanding.¹⁷

The hopelessness and emptiness of the Dark Night is precisely the condition that makes hope, in the strictly theological sense, possible. Hope comes into play when we are really radically at the end, unable to find any further resources to connect the memories, feelings, images and experiences of life in a meaningful pattern or a promising future. Then hope, forfeiting the struggle to press meaning out of loss, becomes a free, trustful commitment to the impossible, which cannot be built out of what one possesses.¹⁸

Estrangement and abandonment administer the final test of love. Love prevents us from forcing the loved one into the constraints of our needs and so takes the beloved as he or she is. In the face of seeming rejection and affective loss, theological love will not, in the end, surrender to hatred or violence nor forfeit belief in its own worth and lovability. Overcoming the will to die, this love lives honestly with the pain of its own woundedness and longing. It continues to serve others, often with great effectiveness, in spite of profound affective deprivation and loss.¹⁹

The contemplative posture of faith, hope and love slowly repatterns or transforms desire and consciousness and prepares the human person for the participatory love-driven knowledge. Divine Wisdom is and gives. This subversive dynamic of beloved Sophia is set in motion when human suffering, loss and emptiness have reached such a pitch of consciousness, are such a reflection of Jesus silenced, rejected, abused, dismissed or abandoned, that the capacity of the human person is hollowed out for deeper knowing, deeper mutuality, a Wisdom presence and vision in the world. Then the image of Jesus-Sophia Dying, the image of all that is dying within and without, reaches completion.

[This is] the real imitation [imprinting] of the perfect life of the Son of God . . . [through which God] will bring her to the high perfection of

union with the Son of God, her spouse, and transformation in Him through love. [Therefore,] When this . . . night (God's communication to the spirit, which usually occurs in extreme darkness of soul) has passed, a union with the Spouse, *Who is the Sophia of God*, then follows . . . [and] love is perfect when the transformation of the soul in God is achieved. (SC 1.10; IA 2.4)²⁰

The limits of this article on Dark Night preclude examining what it means in real life to be transfigured in Divine Sophia and to become a prophet of Sophia in the world.

Implications

First, if there is at the present time a participatory world-view crying out for paradigmatic significance, Sophia may well be the God-image that resonates with the current state of the collective psyche.²¹ Sophia is the one clear, significant God emerging out of a long dark night of broken symbols. Thus we may see Jesus more and more taking on the marks of Sophia. This is where the tradition of Wisdom, so long muted and marginalized but embodied with such prophetic power in the mysticism of John of the Cross, will reassure us and enable theology to speak anew about Jesus Christ.

Second, there is a correlation between the intense interest in the Dark Night, the awareness of Sophia and the emergence of feminism, just as there was a correlation in the past between the muting of contemplation, the suppression of Sophia and the marginalization of women.

Third, feminists have long been conscious of the darkness of this dying time as they struggled to find meaning in the experience of impasse in their God images, in their churches and in their socio-political lives. But Richard Tarnas emphasizes that the crisis of modern man [*sic*] is essentially not a feminine but a masculine crisis. It is the dominance of the masculine in us that is dying and being called to transcend itself in the Dark Night experience of a Sophia-God. Perhaps now when this pervasive masculinity has become so apparent and when the feminine is welling up with such powerful energy, Sophia is the God-image capable of moving with humanity into the next evolutionary era.

Fourth, initially it seemed to me that transformation in Jesus-Sophia or Dark Night was subversive because it radically changed desire, consciousness and ultimately vision and behaviour, personal and societal. But perhaps it is subversive, above all, because it could change radically our theological discourse since it is, in fact, a hermeneutic of the very nature of God.

These are the questions that contemplative people may face today and those who pray with depth and seriousness under the guidance of St Ignatius may well face these contemporary problems of the Dark Night as they continue to grow in prayer.

NOTES

¹ Thomas H. Green, *When the well runs dry* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1979), pp 10 and 110. See pp 110–133.

² I am using the Greek *Sophia*, not only because feminists prefer it, but because the biblical depiction of Wisdom is invariably female, suggesting a person rather than a concept or an attribute. Biblical Wisdom is treated not as an 'it' but as a summoning 'I', as a 'sister, mother, female beloved, . . . and a myriad of other female roles . . .' See Elizabeth Johnson, *She who is* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), p 87, whose analysis of Sophia has influenced my study, and Roland E. Murphy, *The tree of life: an exploration of biblical Wisdom literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), pp 133–49, for a treatment of 'Lady Wisdom'.

³ The Institute of Carmelite Studies will publish in late 1995 *Education for contemplation* in which a more extensive study of Wisdom in John of the Cross will appear. This article is part of that study.

⁴ Most references to John of the Cross are inserted in text. A=Ascent of Mount Carmel, DN=Dark Night, SC=Spiritual Canticle, LF=Living Flame of Love. Most quotations are from Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, *The collected works of John of the Cross* (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1991).

⁵ This is a fundamental text indicating the direction of affective transformation and interpreting all that precedes it concerning desire in Book I of the *Ascent*.

⁶ Elizabeth Johnson's work is a superb example of this. See also Sandra Schneiders, *The revelatory text: interpreting the New Testament as sacred scripture* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1991), pp 180–97, for an example not of Sophia's retrieval but of a feminist interpretation of the meaning of Jesus in John 4.

⁷ See LF 3.41–45 where John castigates those spiritual directors who do not understand the secret, loving wisdom of contemplative prayer that is 'the sublime anointings and shadings of the Holy Spirit', and therefore damage or destroy by poor direction the image God is painting within the human person. 'Who will succeed', he says, 'in repairing that delicate painting of the Holy Spirit once it is marred by a coarse hand?'

⁸ Here we intersect with John M. Staudenmaier's interpretation of the dynamic of the Second Week of the *Exercises* which 'inculcates a form of personal intimacy with Jesus that opens out to intimacy with the larger world, an intimacy of affective engagement that leads to action in the world'. See 'To fall in love with the world', *Studies in the spirituality of Jesuits* 26 (May 1994).

⁹ When I wrote 'Impasse and Dark Night' in *Living with Apocalypse*, ed Tilden Edwards (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), I did not address the significance of Jesus-Sophia in the Dark Night. This christological interpretation of the Dark Night is a necessary complement to the impasse experience.

¹⁰ See IIDN 5.1–2; IIDN 17; IIA 8.6 to study the equivalencies that John sets up.

¹¹ Christ Crucified is seen as the unitive image or pattern of the Dark Night in IIA 7.

¹² I draw heavily on the creative thought of Richard Tarnas regarding this 'participatory epistemology'. See *The passion of the Western mind* (New York: Harmony Books, 1991), pp 433–445.

¹³ See Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The universe story* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), p 243. 'Existence itself is derived from and sustained by this intimacy of each being with every other being.'

¹⁴ I first developed this interpretation in 'A discipleship of equals: voices from a tradition' in *A discipleship of equals: toward a Christian feminist spirituality*, ed Francis A. Eigo (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1988).

¹⁵ See IIDN 9.3; 5.3–5; IIA 4 & 8.

¹⁶ See IIDN 7; IIDN 9.3 & 7; IIIA 16 & 35.5; LF 1.23.

¹⁷ John writes in IIDN 21.11: 'Faith darkens and empties the intellect of all its natural understanding and thereby prepares it for union with divine wisdom, who is the Word the Son of God'. See also IIA 3 for John's teaching on faith and IIA 4.1–3; IIA 8 & 9; IIDN 16.8.2.

¹⁸ John explains in IIDN 21.11: 'Hope empties and withdraws the memory from all creature possessions, for as St Paul says, hope is for what is not possessed. It withdraws the memory from what can be possessed and fixes it on that for which it hopes. Hence, only hope in God prepares the memory perfectly for union with Him.' Karl Rahner has helped me interpret John's thought on hope and on the theological virtues. See 'On the theology of hope', *TI X* and 'Theology of death', *TI XIII*.

¹⁹ John explains in IIDN 21.11–12: 'Charity empties and annihilates the affections and appetites of the will of whatever is not God and centres them on God alone. Thus charity prepares the will and unites it with God through love.'

²⁰ Elizabeth Johnson reminds us of a long-standing tradition of interpretation concerning martyrs, a tradition which Vatican II continues: 'Martyrdom "transforms" a disciple into an intense image of Christ, *imago Christi*, for the martyr "perfects that image even to the shedding of blood."' See *She who is*, p 74 and *Lumen gentium* 42.

²¹ What Tarnas writes about paradigms is applicable to our God images: 'The birth of every new paradigm begins the process of gestation, growth, crisis and revolution all over again. Each paradigm is a stage in an unfolding evolutionary sequence and when the paradigm has fulfilled its purpose, when it has been developed and exploited to its fullest extent, then it loses its luminosity . . . it becomes oppressive, limiting, opaque, something to be overcome . . .' (*op. cit.*, p 439).