

TRADITIONS OF SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

St John of the Cross: Spiritual Guide

WRITING SOMETIME BETWEEN 1582 and 1585 from his monastery across from the Alhambra in Granada for Carmelite friars and nuns in Andalusia, John of the Cross begins the 28th chapter of the second book of *The ascent of Mount Carmel* with these words:

The discreet reader must always keep in mind my intention and goal in this book: to guide the soul in purity of faith through all its natural and supernatural apprehensions, in freedom from deception and every obstacle, to union with God. (A2, 28, 1; cf A3, 2, 1–3)¹

This clear statement of his goal in spiritual guidance resulted, in part, from an unforgettable prison experience a few years earlier in the city of Toledo. There, from December 1577 until August 1578, John endured nine months of incredible physical, emotional and spiritual deprivation that profoundly influenced his understanding both of Christian spirituality and his role as a spiritual guide.

Due to a tragic, but, for those times, probably an inevitable jurisdictional conflict over the development of the reform begun in 1562 among the Spanish Carmelites by Teresa of Avila, John's religious superiors charged him with disobedience for refusing to abandon Teresa's reform. As punishment they imprisoned him in the monastery of Carmelite friars in Toledo.

Place in a windowless room, ten feet long and six feet wide, that was little more than a dark closet, John, then thirty-five years old, suffered extreme sensory deprivation—a diet of water, bread and sardines; prolonged periods of darkness and confinement, under guard day and night, with little exercise; seldom a change of clothing, minimal care for hygiene, his room filled with the stench of his own body odour, sweat, urine and excrement; severe cold in winter, extreme heat in summer; and regular beatings on his bare back by the other friars in the monastery's refectory with a discipline or small whip made of twigs.

In addition to this physical punishment, John was continually harassed by the superiors as obstinately disobedient. Undoubtedly, he also felt abandoned by his fellow friars in the reform who, despite Teresa's constant effort to rouse them to action on John's behalf, apparently made no effort to find or free him. He heard nothing from or about Teresa herself. Inevitably, there were prolonged periods of painful self-doubt. After all, good religious men were accusing him of disobedience. Perhaps he was mistaken in his allegiance to Teresa. Was he really only attached to his own will and not at all to God's?

Yet, in the midst of this enforced desolation, where he drew his greatest strength from his identification with Jesus abandoned on the cross, John experienced a new awakening of Jesus himself in the depth of his own being, a deepening union with his Lord as Spouse of his soul, and a total transformation of his own consciousness in the Son of God. This experience determined the rest of his life.

Some months after his dramatic escape, when John recalled his imprisonment in the poem 'The dark night', he dwelt upon, not the mental and physical pain of dark confinement, but the sheer grace—*oh dichosa ventura!*—that brought him transformation.

In darkness, and secure,
by the secret ladder, disguised,
—ah, the sheer grace!—
in darkness and concealment,
my house being now all stilled.

On that glad night,
in secret, for no one saw me,
nor did I look at anything,
with no other light or guide
than the one that burned in my heart.

This guided me
more surely than the light of noon
to where he was awaiting me
—him I knew so well—
there in a place where no one appeared.

Oh guiding Night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
the Lover with his beloved,
transforming the beloved in her Lover.

The prison not only transformed John in Jesus, but it also shaped his thinking about his ministry as a spiritual guide. Already an accomplished guide before his Toledo ordeal, one whom Teresa called 'the Father of my soul' and considered especially gifted for this ministry,² John now saw clearly that self-emptiness best disposes a person for transformation. Accordingly, when he resumed his ministry of spiritual guidance in Andalusia in 1579, he endeavoured to enkindle in persons a longing for union with the transforming Spirit present within them and to teach them how to prepare themselves for this union by voluntarily emptying themselves in sense and spirit so that they might be filled with the Wisdom of God.

Transformation in Christ: goal of Christian spirituality

After Toledo, John devoted his entire priestly ministry to showing persons the road to union with God. Primarily a union of the human will with the divine,

John calls this a 'union of likeness' because it begets a likeness of love between God and the person. This union exists

when God's will and the soul's are in conformity, so that nothing in the one is repugnant to the other. When the soul rids itself completely of what is repugnant and unconformed to the divine will, it rests transformed in God through love. (A2, 5, 3)

The two wills truly become one and 'this one will is God's will which becomes also the soul's' (A1, 11, 3).

John considers this union and transformation to be identical with the state of perfection and the spiritual marriage between a person and Jesus Christ. He likens it to the sun shining through a window. When the window is dirty, one readily sees the difference between the window and the sun. But when the dirt is completely wiped away, the window and the sun are indistinguishable. Without ceasing to be a window, it nonetheless appears to be the sun. The sun transforms the window: the window becomes the 'light of the sun by participation' (A2, 5, 6-7).

John also imagines a person's union with God as a block of wood being transformed in fire. When the log is first placed into a fire, it is clearly separate from the flames. But then the fire gradually dries the wood, darkens it, and finally transforms it into itself. Similarly, the Holy Spirit, the Living Flame of Love, works on persons, gradually purifying them and finally transforming them into divine fire (F1, 4&19).

These images vividly convey the actual psychological effects of this union and transformation in human persons. Union with God does not destroy our psychological functioning—our ability to know, love, feel, think, remember, desire—but transforms it into the divine. John explains:

Since every living being lives by its operations . . . and the soul's operations are in God through its union with him, it lives the life of God . . .

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.

And the will, which previously loved in a base and deadly way with only its natural affection, 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 natural appetite that only had the ability and strength to relish creatures (which cause death), is changed now so that its taste and savor are 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. For the soul, like a true daughter of God, is moved in all by the Spirit of God, as St Paul teaches in saying that those who are moved by the spirit of God are children of God himself (Rom 8:14).

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. Such a union is wrought in this perfect state of the spiritual life, yet not as perfectly as in the next life. (F2, 34)

Union with God actually enables us to see all creation with the eyes of God, to respond to every situation in our lives with the heart of Jesus, and to be motivated by the Holy Spirit in all our actions. For John this transformation of our natural powers of knowing, loving, remembering, feeling and acting represents the psychological consequences of St Paul's words when he said: 'I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me' (Gal 2:20).

Accordingly, John's criterion for spiritual progress is not the multiplicity and intensity of extraordinary religious experiences, but rather the gradual transformation of the human personality in God. He discourages prolonged discussions of special revelations and locutions because, in themselves, they are unrelated to becoming a new person in Christ. Instead, he encourages radical faith, hope and love as the surest means to dispose oneself for the transforming action of God. Even when God gives persons extraordinary experiences, John advises the following:

Spiritual directors should guide [those receiving supernatural communications] in the way of faith by giving them good instructions on how to turn their eyes from all these things and on their obligation to denude their appetite and spirit of these communications in order to advance. They should explain how one act done in charity is more precious in God's sight than all the visions and communications possible—since these imply neither merit nor demerit—and how it is that many individuals who have not received these experiences are incomparably more advanced than those who have received many. (A2, 22, 19)

The Holy Spirit: the guide in our heart

John is always careful to emphasize that human transformation is primarily God's work, although persons dispose themselves for God's action through

continual dying to disordered desires for sensory pleasure and living in constant faith, hope and love. Similarly, he insists that the Holy Spirit, not the human guide, is the principal agent in this transformation, although human guides play an important instrumental role:

... directors should reflect that they themselves are not the chief agent, guide, and mover of souls in this matter, but the principal guide is the Holy Spirit, who is never neglectful of souls and they themselves are instruments for directing these souls to perfection through faith and the law of God, according to the spirit given by God to each one. (F3, 46)

Repeatedly, John speaks of God acting directly within persons leading them to divine union, primarily through contemplation, God's self-communication to the person. God communicates knowledge of himself to us in various ways: through nature, for example, where we infer the beauty of God from a lovely sunset; and through revelation, where we learn from scripture and tradition that God is person, human and present in our world. But John focuses upon an even more personal and intimate form of God's self-communication, for in contemplation God reveals to us his own loving knowledge of himself and of us.

By means of this contemplative knowledge, God heals the effects of sin in our life, transforms our personality and unites us to God's self. In the light of this loving knowledge, we gradually come to know ourselves as we truly are and God as God truly is. When we know ourselves as God knows us, we see ourselves accurately, including all the effects of sin upon our motives, choices and behaviour. And when we know God more as God truly is, this knowledge purifies us of our inadequate images of God formed throughout our lives so that we better understand the real God—transcendent mystery, incomprehensible good, yet flesh and blood in Jesus Christ.

As this loving knowledge grows within us, we gradually let go of our disordered desires to serve ourselves and begin to centre our desires upon God present within us. In fact, the contemplative journey to union with God is simply this lifelong process by which, in the light of God's loving knowledge, our psychic energy is lifted from ourselves as its primary object and centred securely in God. This continuing energy shift from self to God, with all its joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, pleasure and pain, is the road leading to union with God. John writes:

The soul, if it desires to pay close attention, will clearly recognize how on this road it suffers many ups and downs, and how immediately after prosperity some tempest and trial follows, so much so that seemingly the calm was given to forewarn and strengthen it against further penury. It sees, too, how abundance and tranquillity succeed misery and torment, and in such a way that it thinks it was made to fast before celebrating that feast. This is the ordinary procedure in the state of contemplation until one arrives at the quiet state: the soul never remains in one state, but everything is ascent and descent.

The reason is that since the state of perfection, which consists in perfect love of God and *non-attachment to self*, cannot exist without knowledge of God and of self, the soul necessarily must first be exercised in both. It is now given the one in which it finds satisfaction and exaltation, and now made to experience the other, humbled until the ascent and descent cease through the acquiring of perfect habits. For the soul will then have reached God and united itself with him. (N2, 18, 3-4)³

The duty of the spiritual guide

With the Holy Spirit so active in leading persons to divine union, John understands the instrumental role of the spiritual guide as helping persons dispose themselves for contemplation, God's self-communication which alone heals, transforms and unites persons with God. He explains:

God, like the sun, stands above souls ready to communicate himself. Let directors be content with disposing them for this according to evangelical perfection, which lies in nakedness and emptiness of sense and spirit; and let them not desire to go any further than this in building, since that function belongs only to the Father of lights from whom descends every good and perfect gift [Jas 1:17] . . . And since he is the supernatural artificer, he will construct supernaturally in each soul the edifice he desires, if you, director, will prepare it by striving to annihilate it in its natural operations and affections, which have neither the ability nor strength to build the supernatural edifice. The natural operations and affections at this time [when God infuses himself into the soul through contemplation] impede rather than help. It is your duty to prepare the soul, and God's office, as the Wise man says, is to direct its path [Prov 16:9], that is, toward supernatural goods, through modes and ways understandable to neither you nor the soul . . . (F3, 47)

A spiritual guide's duty, according to John, is simply to help persons embrace fully the gospel of Jesus and live in pure faith. It is to help persons empty themselves of disordered attachments to sensory pleasure, ideas, memories, emotional experiences and to any particular thing—temporal, natural, sensory, moral, supernatural or spiritual—that would be an obstacle to God's self-communication in contemplation, the general loving knowledge which heals and transforms the personality in God. As Moses led the Israelites into the Sinai desert where God formed them into his people, so the spiritual guide assists individuals into the dark nights of sense (through mortification of disordered desire for sensory pleasure) and spirit (through letting go of unhealthy clinging to one's own understanding, images, and emotional experiences of God) where God transforms them into the likeness of Jesus Christ (F3, 38).

John's experience, especially in Toledo, taught him that sensory and spiritual emptiness or 'annihilation', while at times excruciatingly painful, is nevertheless

the quickest and safest road to union with God. From personal experience he knew that to choose voluntarily to centre our emotional energies in God rather than in things not only frees us from addiction and anxiety but best prepares us to receive the transforming loving knowledge of God. He continually reassures persons that if they do not fail to do their part in emptying their sense and spirit of disordered attachments, God will not fail to do his:

If individuals would eliminate these impediments and veils [attachments to particular understandings and experiences] and live in pure nakedness and poverty of spirit . . . their soul in its simplicity and purity would 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. (A2, 15, 4; see also A2, 4, 2; A3, 2, 13; C10, 6)

Qualities of a good guide

Three qualities enable spiritual guides to fulfil their duty of helping persons to dispose themselves for contemplation: learning, discretion and experience. Knowing sacred scripture, theology, psychology, and the history of Christian spirituality and how to apply principles drawn from these fields in guiding individual persons is the foundation of spiritual guidance. But, of the three qualities, John considers experience the most important. 'Although the foundation for guiding a soul to spirit', he states in *The living flame of love*, 'is knowledge and discretion, directors will not succeed in leading the soul onward in it when God bestows it, nor will they even understand it if they have no experience of what true and pure spirit is' (F3, 30).

John's personal commitment to contemplative prayer, reinforced by his extraordinary prison experience, enabled him to discover the incredible depths of the human soul which he gradually understood to be an infinite capacity for God. Moreover, he recognized the damage we inflict on our spirit when we attempt to satisfy this infinite capacity with anything other than God. From these personal discoveries he could confidently reassure persons of the benefits of living in dark faith, longing for God alone. Thus he wrote to Juana Pedraza, a young lay woman undergoing spiritual darkness:

Those who desire nothing else than God walk not in darkness, however poor and dark they are in their own sight . . . You were never better off than now because you were never so humble or so submissive, or considered yourself and all worldly things to be so small; nor did you know that you were so evil or God was so good, nor did you serve God so purely and disinterestedly as now, nor do you follow after the imperfections of your own will and interest as perhaps you were accustomed to do . . . God does one a great favor when he darkens the faculties and impoverishes the soul in such a way that one cannot err

with these. And if one does not err in this, what need is there in order to be right other than to walk along the level road of the law of God and of the Church, and live only in dark and true faith and certain hope and complete charity, expecting all our blessings in heaven, living here below like pilgrims, the poor, the exiled, orphans, the thirsty, without a road and without anything, hoping for everything in heaven?' (L19)

A guide for the road to union with God

Reliable guides know their roads from personal experience. So John understood his role: to guide persons to union with God along a road he knows from his own experience.⁴ As a good guide, he first provided persons with a road map for the journey. He placed this map at the front of his treatise, *The ascent of Mount Carmel*, as a visual summary of all that he would say in the following pages. The map shows the various roads leading up Mount Carmel to union with God. The road on the right, called the way of the imperfect spirit, goes to God by seeking the good things of earth; while the road on the left, also called the way of the imperfect spirit, goes to God by seeking heavenly goods. Both roads trail off to the side of the mountain. The road in the middle, the path of Mount Carmel, is the way of the perfect spirit. On this road, the most direct way to the summit, the signs read: '*Nada, nada, nada . . . aun en el monte nada*'—'nothing, nothing, nothing . . . and on the mountain nothing'. One travels this road by seeking nothing but God throughout the entire journey.

Near the top of the mountain, the middle road leads to a spacious area where one discovers peace, joy, happiness, delight, wisdom, justice, fortitude, charity and piety; indifference to suffering or glory; and possession of all earthly and heavenly goods without desiring them. Here, the middle road ends, for on top of this mountain 'there is no longer any road because for the just there are no laws, the just being a law unto themselves'. At the bottom of the map are the instructions for travellers taking the middle road:

. . . To come to possess all, desire the possession of nothing . . . In this nakedness, the spirit finds its quietude and rest, for in coveting nothing, nothing tires it by pulling it up, and nothing oppresses it by pushing it down, because it is in the center of its humility.⁵

In actual practice, John started off beginners on this road with mortification and prayer. He states:

The chief concern of spiritual masters with their disciples is the immediate mortification of every appetite. The directors should make them remain empty of what they desire so as to liberate them from so much misery [as that caused by disordered appetites which weary, torment, darken, defile, and weaken the soul]. (A1, 12, 6; see also A1, chapters 6–10)

John pointed out to beginners the damage we do to ourselves by inordinate attachment to pleasure, and the psychological benefits that result from desiring

God as the only goal of our lives. Moreover, he assisted them in establishing a reasonable daily discipline of ordered living centred around desire for God alone. As one practice in such a programme, he counselled daily reflection upon and imitation of Jesus Christ, who in this life 'had no other gratification, nor desired any other, than the fulfillment of his Father's will, which he called his meat and food' (A1, 13, 4).

In addition to mortification, John taught beginners to pray. He began by showing them the way of discursive meditation, recommending that they spend their time of formal prayer 'imagining Christ crucified . . . or God seated on a throne with resplendent majesty; or . . . considering glory as a beautiful light . . . ; or, in similar fashion, any other human or divine object imaginable' (A2, 12, 3). Such meditations generally bring sensory pleasure which reinforces our commitment to live for God and weakens our disordered desires for creatures. These meditations ignite 'urgent longings of love' (A1, 14, 2) which make us eager to serve God and strengthen us for the long journey ahead to divine union.

John paid close attention to the prayer of beginners, watching for signs indicating the onset of contemplation, God's self-communication to them. In particular, he looked for three phenomena: inability to continue the practice of discursive meditation, loss of pleasure and fervour in religious exercises, yet a deep longing for God, desiring only to be alone and quiet in his presence. When he observed these three signs present simultaneously in persons, John judged God was beginning to communicate his loving knowledge to them. At this critical point, he counselled them to be at peace with their inability to meditate and loss of fervour, as these are necessary only in the initial stages of the journey; more importantly, he encouraged their desire to be quiet before God, counselling them to pray with a simple, loving awareness of God, their hearts and minds open to receive God's loving wisdom and knowledge (A2, 12, 6-13, 8; N1, 9, 1-10, 5; F3, 32-38).

After helping persons through this transition from discursive meditation to contemplative prayer, John continued to insist on mortification. Now, however, in addition to dying to disordered desires for sensory pleasure in creatures, he placed more emphasis upon non-attachment to specific religious ideas, concepts, images, memories, feelings and emotions. While each may have a temporary importance along the way, attachment to them can also become an obstacle to the inflow of God's general loving knowledge into the soul. Consequently John continually reminded persons that faith, hope and love are the best means for keeping their mind and heart open and free for God's self-communication.

Aware that the Holy Spirit is a person's true guide and careful not to impose his own agenda on anyone, John nevertheless encouraged contemplatives to share their experiences with him. Through this sharing, individuals were able to discern and clarify God's action in their lives, avoid misinterpretation of their experiences, and receive support and confirmation from his acceptance and understanding.

This sharing is particularly important during the trials associated with a person's final purification previous to complete transformation in God. John's role was not to minimize or take away these sufferings, but simply to accompany the person with care and understanding while God completes his masterpiece in the soul. These periods of purification are for the director

a time to give comfort and encouragement that [persons] may desire to endure this suffering as long as God wills, for until then no remedy—whatever the soul does, or the confessor says—is adequate. (A, Prologue, 5)

On this point, John spoke from experience:

... until the Lord finishes purging them in the way he desires, no remedy is a help to them in their sorrow. Their helplessness is even greater because of the little they can do in this situation. They resemble one who is imprisoned in a dark dungeon, bound hands and feet, and able neither to move nor see nor feel any favor from heaven or earth. They remain in this condition until their spirit is humbled, softened and purified, until it becomes so delicate, simple, and refined that it can be one with the Spirit of God, according to the degree of union of love that God, in his mercy, desires to grant. (N2, 7, 3)

For one perfectly united to God, completely under the Holy Spirit's guidance, John knew that there is little else a spiritual guide can provide other than a continued presence for whatever discernment, clarification and support the person may need. Even then, he realized that for such a person 'love alone, which at this period burns by soliciting the heart for the Beloved, is what guides and moves her, and makes her soar to God in an unknown way along the road of solitude' (N2, 25, 4).

As a rule of thumb, John always proposed for the entire journey the imitation of Jesus, who himself declared 'I am the way' (Jn 14, 6), as the safest and quickest road to union with God. John especially emphasized imitating Jesus' self-emptying on the cross, where, annihilated in sense and spirit, Jesus

accomplished the most marvelous work of his whole life, surpassing all the works and deeds and miracles that he had ever performed on earth or in heaven. That is, he brought about the reconciliation and union of the human race with God through grace. (A2, 7, 11)

For this reason, John said:

I should like to persuade spiritual persons that the road leading to God does not entail a multiplicity of considerations, methods, manners, and experiences—though in their own way these may be a requirement

for beginners—but demands only the one thing necessary; true self-denial, exterior and interior, through surrender of self both to suffering for Christ and to annihilation in all things. In the exercise of this self-denial everything else, and even more, is discovered and accomplished . . . The journey, then, does not consist in consolations, delights, and spiritual feelings, but in the living death of the cross, sensory and spiritual, exterior and interior. (A2, 7, 8, 11)

Conclusion: a guide for today?

How practical for Christians today is John's spiritual guidance, intent as he was upon leading persons to union with God through pure faith and helping them overcome the obstacles to this union created by their own grasping minds and hearts?

In the past, I have thought that perhaps John's experience of transformation in Christ at Toledo was too personal a grace, meant for him alone, to be in any way normative for the Christian community. I have also wondered whether his insistence upon total self-emptying as a condition to receive God's transforming self-communication is simply unreal for persons living in the modern English-speaking world, where personal growth and development, from birth to death, is thought to be primarily a function of interpersonal relationships and whose international economy apparently depends for survival upon persons increasing rather than diminishing their desire for consumer goods.

More recently, however, as I have travelled in United States, Canada, Ireland and the UK, giving retreats, lectures, workshops and seminars based on John of the Cross, I discover people—laity, clergy and religious—hungering for the union with God, personal transformation, perfection of life, and spiritual marriage with Jesus Christ that John describes. In addition, I hear their profound disappointment over the dearth of spiritual guides who can lead them to this union; and even, amidst the plethora of spiritual writing available in English today, of books that can provide reliable guidance beyond the beginning of contemplative prayer.

In response, I refer them directly to John himself who continues to live in his writings and to provide sure guidance for just such persons. In his own day, he observed that there are 'many writings for beginners', but few to guide persons into the depths of divine love (C, Prologue, 3). With regular rereading, the cultural differences between John's world and our own gradually disappear, and we begin to hear his soul speaking across the centuries to our own, clarifying our experiences, encouraging us in dark moments, rejoicing in our delights, guiding us safely to the heights of Mount Carmel, where our union with God in love is complete.

John's teaching on voluntary self-emptying in sense and spirit is, by his own admission, difficult, but good and necessary, 'a substantial and solid doctrine for all those who desire to reach this nakedness of spirit' (A, Prol., 8). This doctrine draws out for our daily life the practical applications of our Lord's words:

Those who wish to come after me must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me. For those who would save their life will lose it, but those who lose their life for me and the gospel will save it. (Mk 8,34–35; see also A2, 7, 4)

Because he helps us respond wholeheartedly and securely to this invitation, John continues today to be a good spiritual guide for Christians.

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NOTES

¹ *The ascent of Mount Carmel*, book II, chapter 28, paragraph 1, from *The collected works of St John of the Cross*, revised edition, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh OCD and Otilio Rodriguez OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1991), p 255. Unless otherwise noted, English translations from St John's writings are from this book. In subsequent references, A=*The ascent of Mount Carmel*, N=*The dark night*, C=*The spiritual canticle*, F=*The living flame of love*, and L=Letters. In *The ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The dark night*, the Arabic numbers refer to book, chapter and paragraph, in that order. Thus, N2, 7, 4 refers to book II of *The dark night*, chapter seven, paragraph four. In *The spiritual canticle* and *The living flame of love*, the Arabic numbers refer to stanza and paragraph in the commentary. So C1, 10 indicates stanza I, paragraph 10 of the commentary.

² Letter of Teresa to Madre Ana de Jesús, no 261 (December 1578) in *The letters of Saint Teresa of Avila*, 2 vols, translated and edited by E. Allison Peers (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1950), 2:625.

³ Italics in the quotation represent my own translation and interpretation of the Spanish '*desprecio de sí*' which might be translated literally as 'to estimate one's self as of little value'. Both Kavanaugh and Rodriguez' American translation and E. Allison Peers' British translation render this phrase, respectively, as 'contempt of self' and 'contempt for self'. Unfortunately, in English, self-contempt implies a pathological relationship to self which I doubt John intends here, and which surely does not describe one who has attained union with God, where all of one's relationships—with God, self, others and the world—are in order. On the other hand, since the contemplative process heals persons of disordered attachment to self, we might describe perfect union with God as characterized by non-attachment to self.

⁴ In today's terminology, John would undoubtedly have preferred the term 'spiritual guide' to our 'spiritual director'. He does not use the Spanish *directores espirituales*, but different forms of words connoting guiding another along a road or path, such as *guiar*, *encaminar*, *enderezar*, *gobernar*, *llevar* and *regir* which today we translate as spiritual 'direction' because of the common usage of that term in English. Similarly, he would probably have been uncomfortable with our current term 'directee'. John saw himself as providing spiritual guidance for persons, *alma* being a word that can be translated strictly as 'soul' or widely as the 'entire human person' composed of sense and spirit, body and soul. In today's usage, John himself would most likely have described his ministry as 'person-centred spiritual guidance'.

⁵ Kavanaugh and Rodriguez, *Collected works*, pp 101, 110–111.