

Prayer as a Process of Surrender

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Abstract

The Carmelite life, according to Teresa of Jesus, is a life lived purely out of the love of Christ or God. The "perfection" the Carmelite nuns have to strive for is therefore not to be sought in faultless conduct, but in the unconditionality of their surrender to this divine love. Contemplative life and prayer are very simple, since their purpose is directing the person towards God and placing trust in Him alone. Because the Lord's Prayer is conducive to a process of surrender, it is elaborated in detail as the "Way of Perfection". Teresa prompts to the complete gift of self to the Creator, the surrender of the human will to His will, and detachment from creatures. The Lord's Prayer presents therefore the perfect model of spiritual transformation and contemplative life as it is leading to a process of surrender.

Introduction

Because the Spanish Inquisition had banned many spiritual books for the general public, and especially for women, the Sisters of the newly founded Saint Joseph Convent in Avila asked Teresa whether she herself would write something on prayer or the spiritual life (Morgain 1997). For Teresa this was the go-ahead to start writing a new book of a practical nature. She gave the book the title: *The Way of Perfection (Camino de perfección)*, an introduction to the contemplative life. She begins her book, however, with the "disasters" that are occurring in northern Europe as a consequence of the Reformation. She wants to do something against this "evil", but must acknowledge her limited role as a woman in a highly male-dominated society (Álvarez, 2006):

I realized I was a woman and wretched and incapable of doing any of the useful things I desired to do in the service of the Lord. All my longing was and still is that since He has so many enemies and so few friends that these few friends be good ones. As a result I resolved to do the little that was in my power; that is, to follow the evangelical counsels as perfectly as I could and strive that these few persons who live here do the same. I did this trusting in the great goodness of God, who never fails to help anyone who is determined to give up everything for Him. (*Camino* 1:2)¹

Teresa's stance with regard to this discrimination is not neutral and she is of the opinion that it goes against the spirit of the Christian faith. Jesus clearly made a stand for women and gave them a prominent role. Thus we read in a passage which was removed by a censor:

Nor did You, Lord, when You walked in the world, despise women; rather, You always, with great compassion, helped them. And You found as much love and more faith in them than You did in men. Among them was Your most blessed Mother, and through her merits – and because we wear her habit – we merit what, because of our offences, we do not deserve. Is it not enough, Lord, that the world has intimidated us... so that we may not do anything worthwhile for You in public or dare speak some truths that we lament over in secret, without Your also failing to hear so just a petition? I do not believe, Lord, that this could be true of Your goodness and justice, for You are a just judge and not like those of the world. Since the world's judges are sons of Adam and all of them men, there is no virtue in women that they do not hold suspect. Yes, indeed, the day will come, my King, when everyone will be known for what he is. I do not speak for myself, because the world already knows my wickedness – and I have rejoiced that this wickedness is known publicly – but because I see that these are times in which it would be wrong to undervalue virtuous and strong souls, even though they are women. (*Camino* 3:7)

Despite this clear protest against a policy which drives women further and further into the margins of public life, Teresa is not a champion of women's rights before the term existed. Her protest mainly concerns the attitude of the church of her time, which considers women suspect from the start. She opposes this attitude, because it is not in accordance with the gospel and so goes against the will of God. Jesus acknowledges women and gives them their rightful place. And so Teresa is of the opinion that also in her time women can be important to combat the crisis in the church. They may lead a (compulsorily) hidden life, but their share in the battle the church has to fight against "evil" is not less for all that.

The danger of such a statement is that it remains nothing but a

hollow phrase. For Teresa however, it expressly has to do with the life she is called to as a Carmelite nun and which she rightfully calls a daring venture. There may be external attacks on the church, but the greatest danger comes from within and has to do with what Teresa calls offending Christ. Christ is not seen in His unimaginable offer of love. Instead people concern themselves with outward affairs that for the “world” may seem important, but do not touch the core of our existence. This is why the Sisters as true soldiers of Christ must defend the inside of the city and in so doing support the other soldiers who have to hold their own in the world (*Camino* 3:1) This inward movement is essential for Teresa and it evokes a battle that does not end at the boundaries of the convent. There, too, there is a continual tension between inside and outside, between that which is avowed and the true confrontation with God.

The Carmelite life as it is advocated by Teresa can best be described as a life lived purely out of the love of Christ or God. The Sisters have abandoned everything to entrust themselves with all their soul to this love. The “perfection” the Carmelite nuns have to strive for is therefore not to be sought in faultless conduct, but in the unconditionality of their surrender to this divine love. Although the “Way of Perfection” is primarily directed towards prayer (De Pablo 1973; Herraiz 1981), in the first chapters of the book Teresa mainly emphasizes the material expression of this in the Sisters’ life. In doing this she seems to want to express that the spiritual cannot be abstracted from the material. Prayer remains empty when it is not put into practice in life as it is concretely lived. Thus already in the second chapter of her book Teresa indicates how important it is to be unconcerned and not to worry about material needs:

Don’t think, my Sisters, that because you do not strive to please those who are in the world you will lack food. I assure you that such will not be the case. Never seek sustenance through human schemes for you would die of hunger – and rightly so. Your eyes on your Spouse! He will sustain you. Once He is pleased, those least devoted to you will give you food even though they may not want to, as you have seen through experience. If in following this advice you should die of hunger, blessed be the nuns of St. Joseph’s! For the love of the Lord, do not forget this. Since you have given up an income, give up worry about food. If you don’t, everything will be lost. (*Camino* 2:1)

For Teresa trust in God is not something abstract. We cannot say that we trust God, and at the same time cover ourselves on other levels. He who gives himself, gives himself completely, or his gift means nothing. The same is true of the three most important virtues of the Carmelite life – charity, detachment and humility – which are all directed towards easing us away from our self-absorption,

trusting that we are in everything the Other's concern (*Camino* 5:15).

Prayer as Foundation of Every Virtue

To undertake (prayer) is a matter of life and death for all Christians. And no one, however lost he may be, should set it aside if God has awakened him to so great a good (*Camino* 16:3).

The continuation of the book is therefore entirely dedicated to prayer. However, Teresa has trouble finding a good starting point. What she actually wants to discuss is contemplative prayer (contemplación), but she realizes that not everyone is called to this. In this respect we can only trust in God's grace. This is why it is better not to have a qualitative judgment on the different types of prayer and humbly to accept what the Lord in His goodness gives us (*Camino* 16:18). In the continuation Teresa does however make clear that prayer is not a goal in and of itself. We don't come to prayer by reciting standard formulas, but by inwardly directing ourselves towards God and placing our trust in Him alone. Then God Himself will lead us to the source of living water. According to Teresa this source is located in the centre of our soul and when we drink from this source, we are assuaged with a thirst that pulls us ever deeper into the infinite longing of God (perfection).

How right and true, as words coming from the mouth of Truth Itself, that such a person will not thirst for anything in this life – although thirst for the things of the next life increases much more than can ever be imagined through natural thirst!

How thirsty one becomes for this thirst! The soul understands the great value of this thirst, and even though the thirst is a most painful, wearying one, it brings with it the very satisfaction by which it is assuaged, in such a way that it is a thirst unquenchable except in earthly things. Indeed, this thirst slakes in such a way that when God satisfies the thirst, the greatest favour He can grant the soul is to leave in it this same need – and a greater one – to drink the water again. (*Camino* 19:2)

For Teresa the inner goal of prayer is that we come in contact with God and learn to trust this Source within ourselves more and more. The way in which this is brought about is of secondary importance to her. Since God works in mysterious ways in this regard, it is not our place to determine this. What is important is that we open ourselves for God in prayer, trusting that He is truly leading us on a path that He alone knows. This is why the way of prayer is a royal road and on it we should not shrink or be irresolute:

For when you are about to gain the treasure – or steal it, since the Lord says that the violent take it away (Mt 11:12) – by a royal road

and by a safe road, the road chosen by our King and all His elect and saints, they will tell you that there are so many dangers and so many things to fear. (*Camino* 21:5)

We travel the road of prayer, when we, in our longing, orient ourselves towards God and do not doubt that we are seen by God in this. This is why according to Teresa vocal prayer (*oración vocal*), as an expression of this inner orientation, cannot be separated from mental prayer (*oración mental*) or this inner orientation itself. For this it is not necessary to use long prayers. A simple Lord's Prayer or Hail Mary suffices to direct our attention and enter into contact with the Source of our life:

Is it too much to ask you to turn your eyes from these exterior things in order to look at Him sometimes? Behold, He is not waiting for anything else, as He says to the bride, than that we look at Him. In the measure you desire Him, you will find Him. He so esteems our turning to look at Him that no diligence will be lacking on His part. (*Camino* 26:3)

The Lord's Prayer: Its Efficacy in the Process of Surrender

The continuation of the book is an explanation of the Lord's Prayer, which is sufficient to reach the highest contemplation. For it is the Lord Himself who taught it to us and who stands by us in this prayer as a loving friend:

Then, daughters, [...] strive to find a companion. Well what better companion than the Master Himself who taught you this prayer? Represent the Lord Himself as close to you and behold how lovingly and humbly He is teaching you. Believe me you should remain with so good a friend as long as you can. If you grow accustomed to having Him present at your side, and He sees that you do so with love and that you go about striving to please Him, you will not be able – as they say – to get away from Him; He will never fail you; He will help you in all your trials; you will find Him everywhere. Do you think it's some small matter to have a friend like this at your side? (*Camino* 26:1)

The Lord's Prayer – if prayed with attention – is much more than the recitation of a prayer. If we go along with the movement of this prayer, God Himself will reveal Himself in this. What is important here is that we not reason too much, because the mind keeps us trapped within the scope of our own logic. Whereas prayer wants to open us for a reality that goes beyond this: the reality of God's love that sustains our life like an invisible foundation. This is why in the words of Teresa we must let go of the external things (*Camino* 26:3), in order to start to see, beyond all that, how God is regarding us in everything. Here the Lord's Prayer functions as an

icon, a window that in its transparency breaks through the obviousness of our own reality.

Now consider what your Master says: “(Our Father) Who art in heaven.” Do you think it’s of little importance to know what heaven is and where you must seek your most sacred Father? Well, I tell you that for wandering minds it is very important not only to believe these truths but to strive to understand them by experience. Doing this is one of the ways of greatly slowing down the mind and recollecting the soul.

You already know that God is everywhere. It’s obvious, then, that where the king is there is his court; in sum, wherever God is, there is heaven. Without a doubt you can believe that where His Majesty is present, all glory is present. Consider what St. Augustine says, that he sought Him in many places but found Him ultimately within himself.² Do you think it matters little for a soul with a wandering mind to understand this truth and see that there is no need to go to heaven in order to speak with one’s Eternal Father or find delight in Him? Nor is there any need to shout. However softly we speak, He is near enough to hear us. Neither is there any need for wings to go to find Him. All one need do is go into solitude and look at Him within oneself, and not turn away from so good a Guest but with great humility speak to Him as to a father. Beseech Him as you would a father; tell Him about your trials; ask Him for a remedy against them, realizing that you are not worthy to be His daughter. (*Camino* 28:1-2)

A scattered mind is someone who can’t manage to focus his attention on that which is essential. He loses himself in multiplicity of external things, because he has lost touch with God as the intimacy of his existence. This is why the Lord’s Prayer begins with the acknowledgement of God as Father. By recognizing in all humility that God is the Source of our life and we therefore live of His love in everything, God can establish His reign in us and set us alight in His fire of love (*Camino* 28:8). This is what Teresa calls prayer of recollection (*oración de recogimiento*). We come from scatteredness to recollection, when we, descending into ourselves, discover that God is the centre of our being and in everything He is our point of reference. Time and again Teresa points out to us that this recollection is very important. It is the prerequisite to enter into contact with God within the solitude of ourselves. This is why we may not make any compromises in this by, in our lack of faith, letting ourselves be led by our concern over what other people think of us (*Camino* 29:1), and thus placing the logic of our own urge for survival over that of God.

Prayer of recollection is inextricably bound up with prayer of quiet (*oración de quietud*). Just as prayer of recollection is inwardly laid-

out such that God can establish His reign in us, prayer of quiet is connected with this action of God's in us. This is the Kingdom we ask for in the Lord's Prayer, so that His name be glorified in us. This prayer is called a prayer of quiet, because we ourselves are not active in it. Here God is at work, and we as human beings can only look on, at what He is working in us.

This prayer (prayer of quiet) is no longer our work, for it's something very supernatural and something very much beyond our power to acquire by ourselves. The best way to hold on to this favour is to understand clearly that we can neither bring it about nor remove it; we can only receive it with gratitude, as most unworthy of it. (*Camino* 31:6)

[..]

The soul is like an infant that still nurses when at its mother's breast, and the mother without her babe's effort to suckle puts the milk in its mouth in order to give it delight. So it is here; for without effort of the intellect the will is loving, and the Lord desires that the will, without thinking about the matter, understand that it is with Him and that it does no more than swallow the milk His Majesty places in its mouth, and enjoy that sweetness. For the will knows that it is the Lord who is granting that favour. And the will rejoices in its enjoyment. It doesn't desire to understand how it enjoys the favour or what it enjoys; but it forgets itself during that time, for the One who is near it will not forget to observe what is fitting for it. (*Camino* 31:9)

In prayer of quiet we receive our nourishment directly from the Source. This is why it is important that we do not fall back in the old pattern of our own activities, but remain close to what is happening. This also and especially holds true for our mind, which necessarily creates distance. For by wondering what is happening to us and what this means, we place ourselves in the role of spectator and bring about a remoteness between ourselves and the immediacy of this encounter. For Teresa it is of great importance that we, by enjoying ourselves, forget ourselves in all this. Here it is not about us, but about God who is looking at us with the gaze of his unconditional love, and by sinking away in this gaze, God gets the chance to establish His reign in us.

However pleasant and salutary the prayer of quiet may be, its action also makes us realize that in this we cannot trust in ourselves and our own insights. The way of God far exceeds the laws of our own logic and we can only travel this way, if we accept His guidance in everything. The phrase "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" expresses this absolute subjection, whatever

personal consequences this may have for us. If God wants to establish His reign in us, we ought to give Him the freedom to do His work, and not think we know best.

Well, I want to advise you and remind you what His will is. Don't fear that it means He will give you riches, or delights, or honours, or all these earthly things. His love for you is not that small, and He esteems highly what you give Him. He wants to repay you well, for He gives you His kingdom while you are still alive. Do you want to know how He answers those who say these words to Him sincerely? Ask His glorious Son, who said them while praying in the Garden (Mt 26:29). Since they were said with such determination and complete willingness, see if the Father's will wasn't done fully in Him through the trials, sorrows, injuries, and persecutions He suffered until His life came to an end through death on a cross. (*Camino* 32:6)

Subjection to God's will also entails the acceptance of suffering. Suffering is not a punishment, but is rather inextricably bound up with the path of our life. In this context Teresa speaks of God's unconditional love. God loves us so much, that He wants to let us share in His own life. And so He tries to ease us away from the world of ourselves and our own pleasure, so that we learn to taste the reality of His love. This demands of us, that we do not shy away from what comes on our path and accept this as our God-given cross to bear.

I myself hold that the measure for being able to bear a large or small cross is love. So, Sisters, if you love Him, strive that what you say to the Lord may not amount to mere polite words; strive to suffer what His Majesty desires you to suffer. For, otherwise, when you give your will, it would be like showing a jewel to another, making a gesture to give it away, and asking that he take it; but when he extends his hand to accept it, you pull yours back and hold on tightly to the jewel. (*Camino* 32:7)

For Teresa life is a sacred space in which God is continually revealing Himself to us. That we do not experience this in this way, has everything to do with us ourselves. For if we consider life as our possession in which we want to see our own ideals realized, then God also can only appear to us within this space. But if we dare to let go of these expectations, in the awareness that our very life is a gift from God's hand, then life loses its instrumental character and it can open itself for us as a space in which, in a hidden way, God speaks to us immediately. This is why in the "Way of Perfection" Teresa has only one message: *the complete gift of ourselves to the Creator, the surrender of our wills to His, and detachment from creatures.*

Because everything I have advised you about in this book is directed toward the complete gift of ourselves to the Creator, the surrender of our wills to His, and detachment from creatures – and you have understood how important this is – I am not going to say any more about the matter; but I will explain why our good Master teaches us to say the words mentioned above, as one who knows the many things we gain by rendering this service to His eternal Father. For we are preparing ourselves that we may quickly reach the end of our journey and drink the living water from the fount we mentioned. Unless we give our wills entirely to the Lord so that in everything pertaining to us He might do what conforms with His will, we will never be allowed to drink from this fount. Drinking from it is perfect contemplation, that which you told me to write about. (*Camino* 32:9)

Although Teresa calls her book the “Way of Perfection”, we cannot bring this perfection about on our own strength. In that sense only God is perfect, and we can only become perfect by losing ourselves in Him and in this way being transformed into God. Thus the way of perfection is inextricably bound up with our annihilation. Only when we dare to let go of ourselves in God and have so, ourselves, disappeared in Him, can God adorn us with His love. This is why Teresa keeps going on about the fact that in this process we should leave every care about ourselves to God. When He wants to bring us to the Source of living water, we should not stand in the way. He knows what is good for us. At the same time this process demonstrates our total dependence. We can do nothing, unless it is given to us by God, and the more He fills us with his love, the more we come to realize that we can in nothing rely on ourselves. It is He who makes us, and all that we can give Him is that we not hinder the light of His love in its outflow by, despite all this, seeking ourselves again anyway.

The poor soul cannot do what it desires even though it may want to; nor can it give anything save what is given. This is its greatest wealth: the more it serves, the more indebted it remains. It often grows weary seeing itself subject to so many difficulties, impediments, and fetters, which result from dwelling in the prison of this body. It would want to repay something of what it owes. To grow weary is quite foolish; for even though one does what’s in one’s power, what can those of us repay who, as I say, don’t have anything save what we have received? All we can do is know ourselves and what we are capable of, which is to give our will, and give it completely. Everything else encumbers the soul brought here by the Lord and causes it harm rather than benefit. Only humility can do something, a humility not acquired by the intellect, but by a clear perception that comprehends in a moment the truth one would be unable to grasp in a long time through the work of

the imagination about what a trifle we are and how very great God is. (*Camino* 32:13)

The prayer "Give us this day our daily bread" initially seems to go against the way in which God's infinite care for us is a matter of course. After all, it is clear that we have nothing to fear in this regard and also should not allow ourselves to be tempted to seek security in this. God gives us what we need and we are to trust Him completely in this (*Camino* 34:4). And so for Teresa this prayer has a deeper-lying dimension and refers to our desire that our eyes be opened for the hidden action of God in our soul.³ He is our true nourishment, and the more we take Him, the more we open up for the desire of God to be united with us.

And since He suffers and will suffer everything in order to find even one soul that will receive Him and lovingly keep Him within, let your desire be to do this. If there isn't anyone who will do it, the Eternal Father will rightly refuse to let Him remain with us. But the Father is so fond of friends and so much the Lord of His servants that in seeing the will of His good Son He doesn't want to hinder this excellent work; in it the Son's love for Him is fully demonstrated by the invention of this admirable means in which He shows how much He loves us and helps us suffer our trials. (*Camino* 35:2)

When Teresa discusses the prayer "Lord, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespassed against us", she first of all indicates how important it is that the second part of this phrase is in the present and not in the future tense. We are not forgiven for the things we will forgive, but for the sake of the things we have forgiven.

Let us observe, Sisters, that He doesn't say "as we will forgive." We can thereby understand that whoever asks for a gift as great as the one last mentioned and whoever has already surrendered his will to God's will should have already forgiven. So, He says, "as we forgive." Thus, whoever may have said sincerely to the Lord *fiat voluntas tua* should have done that will entirely; at least have had the resolve to. (*Camino* 36:2)

For Teresa "to forgive" is inextricably bound up with the will of God, who forgives us in advance for the fact that time and again we seek ourselves and in doing so turn away from God. In His love God wants us completely and so will take every chance He can to draw us towards Himself. The same is true of the person who lives of this surrender to God's will. He forgives in advance, because he wants nothing so much as that the other, just like him, be opened to this grace that he in nothing owes to himself.

After this she immediately focuses on the importance we attach to our own pride. In the Lord's Prayer the issue is not harmless insults that are not worth mentioning, but things that affect us in our sense of our own dignity. It is precisely these insults, that act as a mirror for us and show us how much we are attached to ourselves and our own position. We want appreciation, and when we do not get this respect, we feel this as a violation of our dignity. Prayer however brings us into contact with a level that transcends ourselves and makes us realize that we live of a Love that we can neither grasp nor comprehend. This Love makes us owing from the very start, not because we did something wrong, but because before this Love we are continually empty-handed. We can give nothing that has not already been given to us. For Teresa this not only holds true for our life, but also for our transformation in God's love. The person who has become truly "contemplative", knows that he owes nothing to himself and in everything is completely dependent on Him who in the hidden depths of himself makes him live of God.

Self-esteem is far removed from these persons (i.e. contemplatives). They like others to know about their sins and like to tell about them when they see themselves esteemed. The same is true in matters concerning their lineage. They already know that in the kingdom without end they will have nothing to gain from this. If they should happen to be pleased to be of good descent, it's when this would be necessary in order to serve God. When it isn't, it grieves them to be taken for more than what they are; and without any grief at all but gladly they disillusion others. So it is with those to whom God grants the grace of this humility and great love for Himself. In what amounts to His greater service, they are already so forgetful of self that they can't even believe that others feel some things and consider them an affront. (*Camino* 36:10)

We are contemplative, when we begin to see God's action in our life and recognize that only His grace can truly bring us to life. The more this consciousness grows in us, the more we also disappear from our own centre in our activities and let God do His work in us. According to Teresa we have nothing to fear on this path and we are by God's grace brought successively to the highest degree of perfection.

Our good Master [...] knows that those who ask with perfection will be filled with such favours from His Father that they will reach a high state. In fact, those who are already perfect or those who are approaching it are not afraid of anything, nor should they be, since they have trampled the world underfoot, as the saying goes. The Lord of the world is pleased with them, and they have

the greatest hope of this in the effects of the favours He grants them. Absorbed in these delights they don't want to remember even that there is a world or that they have enemies. (*Camino* 37:4)

Although we can be sure that God has no other goal than to clothe us with the unconditionality of His love, we as human beings should always beware of the pitfall of our own overconfidence. This is why we should take the last words of the Lord's Prayer very much to heart, conscious that as long as we live, the danger of temptations remains.

Thus since the Lord sees that it is necessary to awaken and remind us that we have enemies, that it is very dangerous to be negligent with regard to these enemies, and that we need much more help from the Eternal Father because our fall will be from a higher place, and so that we do not go about mistaken and without self-knowledge, He makes the following petitions so necessary for all as long as we live in this exile: "And lead us not, Lord, into temptation; but deliver us from evil." (*Camino* 37:5)

However far we may have progressed on the way of perfection or the way of surrender, nothing absolves us of the necessity of discernment. For as long as we live, we run the risk of deceiving ourselves by imagining ourselves the possessor of that which has been given us in grace. This is why for Teresa humility remains of the greatest importance. Through humility we realize that every virtue is a gift from God and not a merit of our own. This realization usually doesn't dawn on us until we find ourselves without this grace and thus are once again confronted with ourselves and our own powerlessness.

Now since this is true, who will be able to say of himself that he is virtuous or rich? For at the very moment when there is need of virtue one finds oneself poor. No, Sisters; but let us always think we are poor, and not go into debt when we do not have the means with which to repay. The treasure will have to come from elsewhere, and we do not know when the Lord will want to leave us in the prison of our misery without giving us anything. (*Camino* 38:7)

The way of perfection is the way of acknowledgment that with regard to God we are completely empty-handed. And so we can only offer Him our own insignificance, trusting that He, in His love, will draw us to Him. This is why humility cannot be allowed to keep us from intimate association with God or to sadden us because we believe we are unworthy of Him. True humility does not distress us, but on the contrary opens our eyes for God's infinite mercy. Thus it brings us to entrust ourselves to His love with even more surrender.

(A person's) pain, if the humility is genuine, comes with sweetness in itself and a satisfaction that he wouldn't want to be without. The pain of genuine humility doesn't agitate or afflict the soul; rather, this humility expands it and enables it to serve God more. (*Camino* 39:2)

To travel the path of surrender safely, two pillars are necessary. The first is that of love, the second is that of the fear of God.

Love sets us in motion from within and makes us search for the Beloved in everything. The more this love engrosses us, the more it will hide us from everything that is not God. Simultaneously it sets us on fire more and more and makes us pine away in longing. This is why it is impossible to keep this love hidden. It expresses itself intensely and in many ways. "It is a great Fire; it cannot but shine brightly" (*Camino* 40:4). For Teresa it is very important to remain in this love and not allow ourselves to be caught up by fear or to doubt this love.

The other pillar that lets us ascend safely to God, is the fear of God. This fear directs our feet and makes us walk the path of love safely (*Camino* 40:1). However, we should not confuse the fear of God with timidity. Rather, it is an expression of our deepest desire to do justice to God in everything and not to hinder Him in any way. In this way the fear of God is the compass of love and they both want to lead us to divine freedom. This consists in that we forget ourselves in God.

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Endnotes

¹ The English edition used is volume 2 of The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila:

The way of perfection. Meditations on the Song of Songs. The

interior castle

translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez.
Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1980.

² Allusion to Confessions, book 10, chapter 27.

³ Teresa refers here to the Eucharist, in which God has hidden Himself in the bread. See Chapter 34:5.