

# Asceticism

## Insights from Carmel

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ASCETICISM IS NOT AN 'IN' WORD TODAY.<sup>1</sup> Many religions, however, have an important role for asceticism, even though they may not use the word itself. The word comes from the Greek *askeein* (to work or train), and has associations with athleticism. One could suggest many reasons why it now seems to have a bad press. It is common nowadays to look with some suspicion on the Greek heritage in spirituality, especially where any form of Platonism is detected. Since Platonism is seen to reject or at least disdain what is material in favour of mind and the spirit, spiritualities that are influenced by it are often excessively negative about what pertains to the body. We have only to look at the Desert Fathers, and later Mothers, to see extremes in ascetical practice.

With advances in psychological disciplines one would naturally query the motivation behind the severe asceticism of the Christian East, which was later taken up enthusiastically by Celtic monasticism especially in Ireland; a common phrase in Irish hagiography is 'stern' or even 'excessive' penance. When we view ascetical practices we need to ask some questions, not only, what is done? but more particularly, why is it done? and with what effects? Many writers, not all of them hostile to Christianity or genuine spirituality, have an uneasy response to rigours which might possibly have masochistic overtones, or may be expressions of anorexia nervosa or other pathological states.

There are perhaps more serious objections to asceticism from a theological perspective. Is there not a danger of Pelagianism, of trying to save ourselves? Are practices not an attempt to acquire merit and make unjustified claims on grace, which of its nature is gratuitous? Is asceticism displacing Christ's all-sufficient atonement for sin? Is it a denial of the goodness of creation, with a substratum of dualism? One can certainly detect serious concern by writers of the Reformation tradition in the whole area of asceticism.

### *Asceticism and mysticism*

In patristic writings we find a double approach to asceticism. The Christian East knows a *praxis*, which is both positive and negative.<sup>2</sup>

Very early a two-fold distinction was taken up between *praxis*, which for Evagrius was concerned with cleansing the soul, and *theôria*, which is contemplation, the true work of the soul. T. Spidlík concludes, 'the union of asceticism and mysticism is the doctrinal foundation of all forms of monasticism.'<sup>3</sup> Though we may ordinarily think of the East as engaging in extreme asceticism, there were more moderate schools of thought, such as that of the Russians, who felt that hard work – and the Russian climate – were the basic asceticism.

Eastern asceticism is ultimately not against the body, but with the body and for it. It is not an end in itself, but aims at *apatheia* (dispassion), a difficult concept that has something of the Western ideas of self-control, sobriety, serenity, indifference.<sup>4</sup> Asceticism aims at being able to resist the passions so that, although we can feel their effects, we are not thrown or overcome by them. This state of *apatheia* is an indispensable means for genuine contemplation or the mystical life.

The scholastic period saw the emergence of much writing in the early vernaculars which we would today perhaps call ascetical or mystical. One should remember that until about 1600 'mystical theology' was mystical experience; after that time it was reflection by theologians on such experience. The duo of asceticism and mysticism became clearly defined and separate by the eighteenth century, when writers like the Jesuit Pierre de la Clorivière (1735–1820) brought together the teaching of Ignatius of Loyola and the Carmelite saints, John of the Cross (1542–1591) and Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), in treatises of ascetical and mystical theology. The die was cast and the Church had to live with a disjunction that has lasted until our time.

The treatises that followed had a very unfortunate effect. Recognizing that mysticism is a special divine gift, authors tended to present ascetical aims for everybody, whilst reserving mysticism for an elite few. By the turn of the twentieth century there was a controversy about the call to contemplation.<sup>5</sup> The question was often posed as to whether or not mysticism is the natural or better, the expected, outgrowth of asceticism. Another form of the question was to query if all, or at least many, are called to contemplation. This controversy was eventually superseded by the new orientation of Vatican II, especially its teaching on the universal call to holiness.<sup>6</sup>

One is always aware of the many uses of the word 'mysticism' in current speech and in spirituality. There is a further question of identifying 'Christian' mysticism. There is a useful restriction by writers following E. Underhill, who will not use the word unless there is

a transformation of the mystic's life: purification and illumination are essential preparations for profound mystical union with God.<sup>7</sup> The role of asceticism is that of removing whatever blocks the fullness of human authenticity which is the mystical life. It is in the context of this controversy, and of contemporary unease about asceticism, that the writers of the Carmelite school would seem to have a significant contribution to an ongoing debate.

### ***The Carmelite Rule***

The Carmelite *Rule* is among the briefest of the great rules.<sup>8</sup> It is just over 1,500 words. The hermits living on Mount Carmel asked the local bishop, St Albert of Avogadro (c. 1150–1214), then Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, for a rule or way of life sometime after 1206. These hermits lived in separate cells but were gathered into a fraternity by the *Rule* of Albert.

The Carmelite *Rule* consists of twenty-four short paragraphs dealing with the basic structures of the settlement on Mount Carmel, with liturgical and personal prayer, and with regulations concerning fasting, silence, work and spiritual warfare (based on Eph 6:10–18). A remarkable feature of this *Rule* is the number of times that the legislator inserts moderating clauses that allow exceptions depending on circumstances. The prior is appointed 'by common consent'; places are to be 'suitable and convenient'; refectory reading is prescribed if it 'can be done without difficulty'; there is constant prayer, 'unless there is another duty'; goods are to be distributed 'according to need'; daily Mass is enjoined if 'there is no difficulty'. In the two paragraphs on fasting and abstinence there are eleven exclusions with the reminder, 'necessity overrides every law'. The very last words of the *Rule* are 'See that the bounds of common sense are not exceeded, however, for common sense is the guide of the virtues' (*utatur tamen discretione, quae virtutum est moderatrix*). One should recall that Carmelite writers constantly look to Elijah, and love to comment that God appeared to him not violently, but in a gentle breeze (see 1 Kings 19:11–14). The author is strictest not on fasting or other practices, but about work, serious and continual work: 'earn your bread by silent work; this is the way of holiness and goodness; see that you follow it.' The broad and compassionate tone of the *Rule* has, in a profound way, left its mark on Carmel.

### *The two aims*

Within two decades of the *Rule* being given, persecution in Palestine led to the emigration westwards of the hermit brothers, a process which took about sixty years beginning in 1230. When they came to Europe these contemplatives had to adapt to a different environment and quickly became established among the friars.

Many problems were caused by this quite radical transition. By 1281, and perhaps earlier, the *Constitutions* had an opening rubric or paragraph giving a statement of identity for the friars. It stressed the contemplative life of the hermits on Carmel, noting that they lived by the Fountain of Elijah on Mount Carmel 'in holy penitence [*in sancta poenitentia*] unceasingly maintained'.<sup>9</sup> There is some debate amongst Carmelite scholars about the meaning of this 'holy penance'. Some would interpret it as reflecting the various groups of penitents that arose in Europe in the thirteenth century. Others, including the present author, would wish to explore an Eastern source, the state or attitude of penitence (*penithos*) which goes back to the Desert Fathers. For our purposes here it is probably sufficient to note some ascetical dimension in the core identity of the Carmelite friars.

A still more important document comes from the fourteenth century. It was written by a Catalan, Philip Ribot, around 1380, but claimed to be a work by John, the forty-fourth Bishop of Jerusalem, written in 412. It is called *The institute of the first monks*. St Teresa of Avila knew this text, but not its pseudonymity; she saw it as a very early text, which predated the *Rule* and presented a contemplative ideal of the hermit brothers on Mount Carmel. It was generally accepted as a genuine until the nineteenth century. The importance of this document for Carmelite spirituality can scarcely be exaggerated. It presented a primitive ideal of the Order. The most important passage of the document was the double aim of the Order:

In regard to that life we may distinguish two aims, the one of which we may attain to, with the help of God's grace, by our own efforts and by virtuous living. This is to offer God a heart holy and pure from all actual stain of sin. This we achieve when we become perfect and hidden in Cherith (see 1 Kg 17:2-4) – that is in charity. The other aim of this life is something that can be bestowed upon us only by God's bounty: namely to taste in our hearts and experience in our minds, not only after death but even during this mortal life, something of the power of the divine presence, and the bliss of heavenly glory.<sup>10</sup>

The first of these indicates what is obtainable through human efforts along with the normal grace of God. It involves both a negative and a positive effort. The aim is expressed as purity of heart, a theme that is very central in Carmelite spirituality. Purity of heart might be seen as another expression of *apatheia*, which results from asceticism.

The second aim is clearly mystical. The experiential language of tasting and experiencing is used about intellectual and voluntary faculties. The author is quite clear that it is the result of extraordinary grace, 'only by God's bounty'. What is significant here is that mystical life is presented as an aim of the life, for which the Carmelite should prepare by seeking purity of heart.

In this text we can see clearly the difference between the two states that St Teresa of Avila calls 'ordinary' and 'supernatural' and which correspond respectively to Mansions 1-3 and Mansions 4-7 of *The interior castle*. Generally we should translate Teresa's *sobrenatural* as 'mystical'.<sup>11</sup> Once we become aware of this text we can find its echoes in many places in Carmelite authors. It also underlies a question that all the Order's major writers take up: why do more people not come to great holiness?

When we turn to particular writers from the Carmelite school, we are certainly struck by their insistence on the need for asceticism. But it has its own form or mould. Faithful to the genial spirit of the *Rule* mainstream, Carmelite writers do not advocate extreme penances. Moreover, they are much more concerned with purity of heart, the aim of asceticism and with freedom from sin and destructive attachments or passions than with details of ascetical practices. A phrase typical of Carmelite spirituality is *vacare Deo* (empty or surrendered to God).

### *St Teresa of Avila*

There are a few points about the sixteenth century Spanish Church that are important for an understanding of the works of St Teresa of Avila. The institutional Church was very much concerned with the *Alumbrados*, who were so intent on the Spirit that they downplayed the structures and the sacramental life of the Church. Again, there was an extraordinary interest in mysticism – a parallel would be the late twentieth-century focus on apparitions in many countries. Religious leaders like the inquisitor Fernando de Valdés, and the theologian Melchior Cano, saw great dangers in any form of prayer except vocal. Books on meditation and mysticism often ended up on the *Index*. It would be the great service of Teresa and of Ignatius Loyola to save and restore mental prayer in the Church.

Teresa wrote for two reasons. Firstly, her confessors and religious superiors had little idea of her profound mystical experiences, and asked her to record them. Secondly, as a reformer of Carmel she was anxious to provide instruction for her sisters. In her *Constitutions*, written for nuns of the reformed Carmel, Teresa does not notably add to the ascetical practices of the *Rule*, except in the area of poverty. She commends and demands austerity of life-style, accommodation, clothing and a minimum of possessions, and these last are communitarian rather than personal.

Similarly, her writings for the sisters do not advocate many penances, and they often warn against excessive asceticism, especially when individually chosen. She sees an inclination to extreme asceticism as a temptation arising from either pride or demons. Permission from the superior or confessor is always to be sought in adopting serious penance.<sup>12</sup> Teresian asceticism is much more concerned with charity and interior liberty than with negative observances.<sup>13</sup> Though she does indeed speak continually of detachment (*desasimiento*), she is concerned not so much with an absence of things as with the following of Christ in the way of the evangelical counsels. If the title of a key chapter of *The way of perfection* is 'the great good in detaching oneself inwardly and outwardly from all created things', her aim is interior freedom to love God totally.<sup>14</sup> The most fundamental ascetical virtue in Teresa is probably humility, which is advocated in each of the seven Mansions of the *Interior castle*. With humility there is self-knowledge, which however is not so much self-regarding as God-centred. She notes:

In my opinion we shall never completely know ourselves if we don't strive to know God. By gazing at His grandeur, we get in touch with our own lowliness; by looking at His purity, we shall see our own filth; by pondering His humility, we shall see how far we are from being humble.<sup>15</sup>

As she writes of the elevated graces of the Sixth Mansion, she muses:

Once I was pondering why our Lord was so fond of this virtue of humility, and this thought came to me – in my opinion not as a result of reflection but suddenly: It is because God is supreme Truth; and to be humble is to walk in truth, for it is a very deep truth that of ourselves we have nothing good but only misery and nothingness. Whoever does not understand this walks in falsehood.<sup>16</sup>

But Teresa, who is so overwhelmed by the beauty and wonder of our creation in the image of God,<sup>17</sup> sees humility not in pessimism or self-hatred, but as supremely positive:

Let us, my daughters, imitate in some way the great humility of the Blessed Virgin, whose habit we wear, for it is embarrassing to call ourselves her nuns. However much it seems to us that we humble ourselves, we fall far short of being the daughters of such a Mother and the brides of such a Spouse.<sup>18</sup>

The last pillar of Teresian asceticism, along with the evangelical counsels, humility and detachment, is her coinage, 'determined determination' (*una grande y muy determinada determinación*).<sup>19</sup> It is easy to be holy for a short time, in the circumstances we may select, but the only worthwhile search for holiness is continuous.

The asceticism of Teresa is ultimately Christ-centred: many do not reach the end 'due mainly to a failure to embrace the cross from the beginning'.<sup>20</sup> It is ultimately a failure to accept the cross and to embrace humility that leaves people in the third or lower Mansions so that they do not progress to the supernatural or mystical life.<sup>21</sup>

### *St John of the Cross*

In the popular mind St John of the Cross might seem to contradict our assertion of the Carmelite school's essential moderation in ascetical practice. Many will have heard of his uncompromising 'nothing' (*nada*) and his stern teaching on the dark nights. This accepted view of John of the Cross is essentially misconceived, or at the very least distorted and lacking its true context, which is love. A hermeneutical key for John of the Cross is to be found in his family. His father, Gonzalo de Yepes, who came from a wealthy family, was threatened with disinheritance if he married Catalina Alvarez, a poor weaver. He married her and lived henceforth in poverty.

The most famous chapter in St John of the Cross is probably the thirteenth chapter of the first book of *The ascent of Mount Carmel*, in which he speaks uncompromisingly about nothing (*nada*) if we are to reach all:

To reach satisfaction in all (*todo*)  
 desire satisfaction in nothing (*nada*).  
 To come to possess all  
 desire the possession of nothing.

To arrive at being all  
 desire to be nothing.  
 To come to the knowledge of all  
 desire the knowledge of nothing.  
 To come to enjoy what you have not  
 you must go by a way in which you enjoy not . . .<sup>22</sup>

'Nothing' is central for John of the Cross. In his sketch of the ascent of Mount Carmel, the central pathway has *nada* seven times.<sup>23</sup> Many people stop there. But if only they would read the very next chapter they would see why and how people seek 'nothing'. It is because they are, in the words of his poem, 'Fired with love's urgent longings – *con ansias en amores inflamada*.'<sup>24</sup>

In fact progress into the night of the senses is not possible unless one is drawn by love. Here surely we find reflected John's family life, where he discovered the advantage of surrendering all for love. In the great poem on the Dark Night, he says that when passions are quietened, he could go out on this great journey:

I went out unseen,                      *Salí sin ser notada,*  
 my house being now all stilled.    *estando ya mi casa sosegada.*<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless many people have been put off by the rigour of his teaching on *nada*. Apart from his family there is another key to his teaching. William Thompson has described John of the Cross as a supreme 'pneumopathologist', exposing evil and sin in the human who strives for God.<sup>26</sup> He sees the dark side of human nature as deep and pervasive. He does not think that by our own, grace-assisted efforts, we can come into full freedom. There is purification required, which he describes as 'nights'.<sup>27</sup> The nights are called 'active' when the person is striving for freedom; they are called 'passive' when there is divine work. The active night of the senses is when spiritual pilgrims must strive to imitate Christ and control their desires.<sup>28</sup> The active night of the spirit involves walking, not by consolation or any divine gifts, but in pure faith, hope and love.<sup>29</sup> God must take a hand in purifying the deep roots of the capital sins: pride, covetousness, gluttony, envy and sloth.<sup>30</sup> The passive night of the spirit involves a profound purification of intellect, memory and will, which God achieves by leaving a person in ever deeper desolation.<sup>31</sup> But John of the Cross is not negative about the nights. One is journeying:



towards that divine light of union with God that is achieved, insofar as possible in this life, through love. The darkneses and trials, spiritual and temporal, that fortunate souls ordinarily undergo on their way to the high state of perfection are . . . numerous and profound.<sup>32</sup>

It is, we should note, 'fortunate' people who undergo the nights. Moreover, the journey in the nights is described as 'ah, the sheer grace' (*joh dichosa ventura!*).

The *nada* of John of the Cross is not ultimately negative, it is, much rather, making space for God,<sup>33</sup> which in the early stages is by refusing to give in to appetites. These, for John of the Cross, are inordinate cravings and desires pursued apart from or contrary to moral good. The nights too are ultimately about healing and freedom; whilst it is true that not every suffering is a night, any suffering can become a night if one surrenders to God's transformative action.<sup>34</sup> Ultimately asceticism for John is to be understood less as renunciation than as adherence to God, as we find in his four-line poem 'The sum of perfection' (*Suma de la perfección*):

Forgetfulness of created things,	<i>Olvido de lo criado,</i>
remembrance of the Creator	<i>memoria del Criador,</i>
attention turned towards inward things,	<i>atención a lo interior,</i>
and loving the Beloved.	<i>y estarse amando al Amado.</i> <sup>35</sup>

The historian of mysticism, B. McGinn, notes that those who would see in John and Teresa excessive psychologism are somewhat missing the point. Though there is attention within, and much psychologically astute analysis in their works, their concern is always with the experience of seeking God, and they are careful to relate this experience to the realities of Christian revelation.<sup>36</sup> We must indeed go within and surrender, not to destroy our humanity, but to be transformed by love.<sup>37</sup>

### ***A balanced asceticism***

What we have seen in the Spanish mystics can be replicated elsewhere in the Carmelite school. One has only to think of St Thérèse of Lisieux whose 'Little Way' rested on confidence and love.<sup>38</sup> Another example might be the Belgian mystic, John of St Samson (1571–1636), a blind laybrother of the ancient observance whose works are now being published in critical editions.<sup>39</sup> For him too asceticism is to be understood in the context of divinization or transformation, so that renunciation is ultimately positive:

To begin with renunciation we must know its definition. Renunciation is an entire abandonment of the whole of one's self to God, without any restriction of work or of time. As a result the creature does not act, will, order, suffer or accept anything for himself or his pleasure as such, but solely for the good pleasure of the infinite God purely and simply.<sup>40</sup>

The language may be different, but the sentiments are the same as those of the Spaniards half a century earlier.

### **Conclusion**

Within the Carmelite tradition, asceticism is not a value sought for itself. Nor are extremes of asceticism generally found. It is indeed not easy to identify the ascetical practices of the authors when reading the Carmelite classics. The demanding but balanced asceticism of the *Rule* is presumed, and there are only occasional passing references to disciplines or instruments of penance. One could signal three major contributions of the Carmelite school today in the study of mysticism. Firstly, they have a wholesome doctrine of the Cross, which they speak more often about than about ascetical practices. Secondly, the great Carmelites are supremely focused not on themselves but on God. The path to God is through unselfish loving. Thirdly, they have realism about the human condition, which contradicts the superficial optimism of much contemporary spirituality. Though human nature is good, and creation is to be celebrated, sinful and selfish tendencies lurk deeply within us, so that union with the all-holy God requires profound purification or healing. Purification, or the nights, are ultimately not harshly negative, but are to be embraced in a journey of love. Some contemporary denials of the need for asceticism can forget that the Paschal Mystery into which we are being inserted is a journey from Calvary to Easter to Pentecost.

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### NOTES

1 See J. McMahon, 'Whatever happened to asceticism?', *Spirituality* 7 (2001), pp 104–107.

2 See T. Spidlík, *The spirituality of the Christian East: a systematic handbook* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1986), pp 177–305.

3 *Ibid.*, p 180.

4 *Ibid.*, pp 270–277.

5 See histories of spirituality or the magisterial survey by O. Steggink, 'Study in spirituality in retrospect: shifts in methodological approach', *Studies in Spirituality* 1(1991), pp 5–23, esp. pp 6–10.

6 Vatican II, *Constitution on the Church*, LG, ch 5.

7 E. Underhill, *Mysticism: the nature and development of spiritual consciousness* (Oxford: Oneworld, reprint 1994). Similarly, H. Egan, *An anthology of Christian mysticism* (Collegeville: Pueblo-Liturgical Press, 1991), pp xvi–xx, 15.

8 Recent commentaries are: K. Waaijman, *The mystical space of Carmel: a commentary on the Carmelite Rule* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999); M. Mulhall (ed), *Albert's way* (Rome: Carmelite Institute, 1989); R. Girardello (ed), *Le origini e la Regola del Carmelo* (Rome: Edizioni OCD, 1989).

9 'The rubrica prima' in A. Staring (ed), *Medieval Carmelite heritage: early reflections on the nature of the order* (Rome: Carmelite Institute, 1989), pp 33–43 at 40.

10 Text in B. Edwards (Trans and ed), *The institutes of the first monks* (privately published by Carmelite Friars, Boars Hill, Oxford, 1969 [book one only]), 1:2, pp. 3–4. A critical Latin edition and a translation in the Classics of Western Spirituality series by Paul Chandler, O. Carm. have been long awaited.

11 E.g. *Interior castle* 1 M 2:7; 4 M 1:1.

12 On these points see *Interior castle* 1 M 2:15.

13 See J. Castellano, 'Espiritualidad teresiana: rasgos y vivencias' in A. Barrientos (ed), *Introducción a la lectura de santa Teresa* (Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 1978), pp 105–201 at 179. See also P. Marie-Eugène [Henri Grialou], *I want to see God; I am a daughter of the Church*, two vols (Chicago: Fides, 1953; reprint Allen, Texas: Christian Classics, 1997), 1:80–96; J. Welch, *Spiritual pilgrims: Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila* (New York: Paulist, 1982), esp. chapter 4, 'A map for life's journey', pp 85–110.

14 *Way of perfection*, 8 (title) and 8:2 in *Collected works* 2:71–72.

15 *Interior castle*, 1 M 2, 9 in K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez (trans), *Collected works*, three volumes (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1976–1985), 2:292.

16 *Interior castle* 6 M 10,7 in *Collected works* 2:420.

17 *Interior castle* 1 M 1:1; Epilogue 2–3 in *Collected works* 2:283–284, pp 451–452.

18 *Way of perfection* 13:3 in *Collected works* 2:86.

19 *Passim*, e.g. *Way of perfection* 21:2 in *Collected works* 2:117–118.

20 *Life* 11:15; *Interior castle* 4:2,9 in *Collected works* 1:82; 2:326.

21 See *Interior castle* 3 M 2.

22 *The ascent of Mount Carmel* 1:13,11 in K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez (trans), *Collected works* (Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, revised ed. 1991), p 150.

23 *Ibid.*, pp 110–111.

24 *Ascent* 1:14 in *Works*, pp 151–152.

25 *Ibid.*, stanga 1, *Works*, p 50.

26 W. M. Thompson, *Fire and light: the saints and theology: on consulting the saints, mystics and martyrs in theology* (New York, Mahwah: Paulist, 1987), ch 7, 'St. John of the Cross as pneumopathologist: a mystic's hermeneutics of suspicion', pp 118–142.

27 For introduction on nights see N. Cummins, *Freedom to rejoice: understanding St John of the Cross* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp 31–157.

28 *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, book 1.

29 *Ibid.*, books 2 and 3.

30 *The dark night of the soul*, book 1.

31 *Ibid.*, book 2.

32 *The ascent of Mount Carmel*, prologue 1 in *Collected works*, pp 114–115.

33 *Ascent* 1:5,2; on the whole area see the magisterial work of I. Matthew, *The impact of God: soundings from St John of the Cross* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), part three, 'Space', at

pp 35–50; see too the recent A. Kurian, *Ascent to nothingness: the ascent to God according to John of the Cross* (London: St Pauls, 2000); D. Chowning, 'Freedom to love: negation in the doctrine of John of the Cross' in S. Payne (ed), *John of the Cross: conferences and essays*, Carmelite Studies 6 (Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1992).

34 See Matthew, *The impact* p 72, developed pp 72–85.

35 *Collected works*, p 73.

36 See B. McGinn, 'The role of Carmelites in the history of western mysticism' in K. Culligan and R. Jordan (eds), *Carmel and contemplation: transforming human consciousness*, Carmelite Studies 8 (Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2000), pp 25–50 at pp 32–34.

37 See J. Welch, *When Gods die: an introduction to John of the Cross* (New York, Mahwah: Paulist, 1990); H. Blommestijn, J. Huls and K. Waaijman, *The footprints of love: John of the Cross as guide in the wilderness*, Fiery Arrow Collection 3 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

38 Final words of the unfinished *Story of a soul*.

39 See S.-P. Michel [Bouchereaux], 'Jean de Saint-Samson', *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 8:703–710.

40 *L'Aiguillon* 8 in *Oeuvres complètes I* (Rome: Carmelite Institute – Paris, FAC, 1992), p 111. On author see H. Blommestijn, 'Giovanni di san Sansone' in L. Boriello et al. (eds), *Dizionario di mistica* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), pp 572–574.