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ST. TERESA OF JESUS: THE WOMAN THEOLOGIAN

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Abstract

Women have made very significant contribution to the transmission of faith and one of the greatest figure in the history of this transmission is St. Teresa of Jesus, the woman theologian of the sixteenth century Spain. Her theology is a mystagogy of prayer, to the highest mystical union with God. It is a theology based on her experience and narrated in the first person singular. Her theology is a theology of humility. She is a woman of inquiry and of wonder. She wrote during a time of intense ecclesiastical scrutiny of texts.

Keywords: Women, Church, Prayer, Mystic Union, Faith, Christ.

Abstrak:

Kaum perempuan telah memberikan kontribusi yang sangat berarti bagi penerusan iman dan salah satu tokoh terbesar dalam sejarah penerusan iman ini adalah St. Teresa Yesus, teolog perempuan Spanyol abad keenam belas. Teologinya adalah suatu *mistik doa*, hingga persatuan mistik tertinggi dengan Tuhan. Ini adalah teologi berdasarkan pengalamannya sendiri dan dikisahkan dalam sudut pandang orang pertama tunggal. Teologinya adalah teologi kerendahan hati. Dia adalah wanita yang selalu 'mencari' dan bertanya penuh kagum. Dia menulis pada saat gereja melakukan pengawasan yang ketat terhadap tulisan rohani (pada saat pemeriksaan teks gerejawi yang intens).

Kata-kata Kunci: Wanita, Gereja, Doa, Persatuan Mistik, Iman, Yesus.

Women in the Church

Women have made every significant contribution to the transmission of faith since the early Church. There were some prominent women in the early Church: Phoebe, a deacon of the church of Cenchreae, Junia, prominent among the apostles (Rm 16:7) and the most well known among them was Mary Magdalene, the *apostola apostolorum*¹ and the woman of love.

1 Cf. the special edition of *Bibel und Kirche* 65(2010/4) with the theme *Frauen in der frühen Kirche*.

Women have contributed to the development of the Church in Europe especially with their sacrifice, life of prayer and works of love. Women martyrs have become the pride of the Church from the very early of its history. Seven women are mentioned in the first Eucharistic Prayer, i.e., Felicity, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia and Anastasia.

We have to remember also the silent prominent mothers who gave birth to so many saints: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and now I am sure, lives in you" (2 Tim.1:5; cf.3:15). Most prominent among them was St. Monica, mother of the great St. Augustine.

1. The four women theologians of the Church

Up to the present time there are four women declared by the Church as theologians and doctor of the Church. They are namely St. Catherine of Siena, doctor of the Blood of Christ (1347-1380), St. Teresa of Jesus, doctor of prayer (1515-1582), St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face, doctor of the science of love (1873-1897) and St. Hildegard of Bingen, the emerald of *veriditas* (1098-1179). The four women can be regarded as the crown jewels of the Church². There has been a long road for these women to be declared doctor of the Church. The only obstacle was sex (*obstat sexus*). However before their respective declaration as doctor of the Church, they have become spiritual guide for many simple and spiritual people.

These four women are given through the Holy Spirit the utterance of wisdom and of knowledge (cf. 1 Cor. 12:8). According to Vatican II the Tradition makes progress in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit: "There is growth in insights into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways, it comes through *the contemplation and study* of believers who ponders these things in their hearts (Lk.2:19 and 51). It comes from *the intimate sense of spiritual realities* which they experience." (*Dei Verbum*, art.8). Women have participated and still participate in the growth of Tradition. Their wisdom have become light and inspiration for the Church even here in Indonesia.

In this article I would limit myself on St. Teresa of Jesus, the woman theologian of the sixteenth century Spain/Europe. I am not a historian nor a Teresian scholar. My speciality is the Old Testament. I am just one of her admirers and she is one of my favourite saint.

² Cf. Mary C. Carroll, "Ecclesial Crown Jewels: Catherine, Teresa, Thérèse, and Hildegard," *Spiritual Life* 59:1(2013), 51-62.

2. Teresa of Jesus (1515-1582): the characteristics of her theology

Teresa is one of the most remarkable women of all time. Her life has been told by herself and has been the subject of innumerable biographies. “Her indefatigable activity as a foundress of contemplative monasteries was preceded by a long period of intense inward struggle, before she herself accepted her contemplative vocation.”³ Teresa of Jesus is a “*doctrinx mystica*”.

Teresa is author of works of very high doctrine. She “was prolific writer whose body of material includes poetry, satire and hundreds, if not thousands, of letters, in addition to her famous autobiography and spiritual teachings, a rather remarkable feat that both reflects and surpasses the experience of educated women during that time”.⁴

Her major works are *Vida/Life* (written between 1562-1565), *Camino de perfeccion/Way of perfection* (written in 1566) and *Moradas de Castillo Interior/ Interior Castle* (written in 1577).⁵ All these classic books are to promote her work as reformer of spiritual life⁶ or to say in her own words “to attract souls to so high a blessing” of prayer⁷. Teresa starts her three books in the introduction with a traditional monogram of the name of Jesus, i.e. the three Greek characters “HIS”. She is among the most important figure of all time for Catholic spirituality.

I will speak more about Teresa as a theologian. Who is Teresa as a theologian? What are the characteristics of her theology? How does this woman have such learning without formal theological education (cf. Jo. 7:15)? Teresa can be compared to the shepherds in the night of birth of Jesus who “made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it *were amazed* at what the shepherds told them” (Lk.2: 17-18).

First, Teresa doesn’t only speak about the problem of prayer, but she herself is a woman of prayer, a great mystic. She prayed spontaneously during her work. Prayer of Teresa can be found on almost every page of her writings. Her theology is a theology in front of God, written in His

3 Joachim Smet, *Cloistered Carmel* (Roma: Institutum Carmelitanuum, 1986), 45.

4 Emiel Abalahin, “V Centenary of Saint Teresa of Jesus,” *CITOC* magazine V-No. 2-2015, (4-6) 5.

5 Cf. the following editions of her works: St. Teresa of Avila, *The collected works of* (3 vols.; Washington:ICS Publications, 1976-1985); Teresa de Jesus, *Obras completas* (ed. Tomas de la Cruz; Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 1987); Santa Teresa de Jesus, *Obras Completas* (eds. Efrén de la Madre de Dios-Otger Steggink; Madrid: BAC 1982).

6 Cf. Joachim Smet, *The Carmelites*, vol. 2, The Post Tridentine Period 1550-1600 (Darien: Carmelite Spiritual Center, 1976), 35-36.

7 *Life* 18:8.

presence. God is her business and language.⁸ When the great Protestant theologian Karl Barth remarks that the first duty of a theologian is to pray and to mark his life with a spirit of prayer⁹, then Teresa of Jesus can be regarded as one of the first among the theologians. She is a doctor of prayer.

Second, the theology of Teresa is principally a first person singular (I) theology. It is first of all a theology based on her own experience¹⁰. “She doesn’t really write, she talks on paper; so the vigor of the emotional syntax is always greater than the ordinary channels of grammar”.¹¹ It is therefore very difficult to translate St.Teresa’ writings.¹² She is down to earth woman, spontaneous and very humble.

Third, the theology of Teresa is a theology of humility. Just to quote one example of her introduction to the exposition of the degree of prayer:

“I shall have to make use of some comparison, although I should like to excuse myself from this since *I am a woman* and write simply what they ordered me to write. But these spiritual matters for anyone who like myself *has not gone through studies* are so difficult to explain. I shall have to find some mode of explaining myself, and it may be less often that I hit upon a good comparison. Seeing so much *stupidity* will provide some recreation for your reverence.”¹³

Teresa wrote during a *time of intense of ecclesiastical scrutiny of texts (censorship of books)*. There was campaign against the Alumbrados (= Illuminist)¹⁴, institutional control over diffusion of ideas, and holy women challenged.¹⁵ Women were not reliable spiritual leaders. When friends warn her that she may be accused to the Inquisition (formidable and in Spain, politically controlled office), Teresa lightheartedly remarks:

8 Cf. *Camino/The Way* 20:4.

9 Cf. Karl Barth, *Pengantar ke dalam Teologi Berdasarkan Injil* (Jakarta: BPK, 2012), 155-164.

10 Cf. Joseph Chorpenning, “St Teresa’s presentation of her religious experience,” in *Carmelite Studies Centenary of Saint Teresa* (Washington:ICS,1984),152-188.

11 Quoted from Ramon Menéndez Pidal in Gillian T.W. Ahlgren, *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity* (Ithaca/ London: Cornell University Press, 1996),77.

12 Elias Rivers, “The vernacular mind of St.Teresa,” in *Carmelite Studies Centenary of St.Teresa*, (113-129)128: “The translator must have the spiritual intuition necessary to follow her elliptical train of thought and then as writer, he must be able to produce in another language the similar degree of ellipsis,requiring a similar level or sipiritual intuition on the part of the reader of the translation.”

13 *Life* 11:6.

14 "The term “Illuminism” (alumbradismo) encompassed a wide range of approaches to spirituality,all emphasizing a personal relationship between God and the soul, or interior enlightenment” (Carole Slade, *St.Teresa of Avila* (Berkeley:University of California Press,1995),18).

15 Cf.Gilian T.W.Ahlgren, *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity*, 6-15,15-31.

16 *Life* 33:5.

“This amused me and made me laugh, for I never had any fear of such possibility. If anyone were to see that I went against the slightest ceremony of the Church in matter of faith, I myself knew well that I would die a thousand deaths for the faith or for any truth of Sacred Scripture. And I said they shouldn’t be afraid about these possible accusations;...that I thought that if I did have something to fear I’d go myself to seek out the Inquisitors; and if I were accused, the Lord would free me, and I would be the one to gain.”¹⁶

However, in her early letters she was very concerned for the safety of the manuscript of the *Vida/Life*, her autobiography. She asked her confessor to tear up anything that seems wrong to him and have it copied, “for it could happen that someone might recognize my handwriting”, then he has to send it to John of Avila to be corrected. She was very annoyed when after three years the copy has not been sent. John of Avila later approved the book.¹⁷

Teresa is a woman of great determination. She has fought for her conversion more than twenty years: “...for I was set on gaining eternal goods that I determine to get them by any means whatever.”¹⁸

As a theologian Teresa of Jesus is a woman of wonder, “In whom, Lord, can your mercies shine as they do in me who have so darkened with my evil deeds the wonderful favours you began to grant me?”¹⁹; “*Who will finish telling of His mercies and grandeurs?* To do so is impossible, and thus do not be surprised at what was said, and will be said, because it is but a naught in comparison to what is there to tell of God.”²⁰

Teresa of Jesus is also a woman of inquiry who raises our consciousness of who am I, what ought I to do, when, where and why did this have to happen to us²¹. Holy Scripture especially the Psalms, the Gospels and St. Paul are full of questions like these. One of her most demanding question is *about prayer*,

“For if those who do not serve him but offend him derive so much good from prayer and find it necessary-and *no one can truly discover any harm that prayer can do*, the greatest harm being not to practice it-*why do those who serve God and desire to serve him abandon it?*”²².

Another example of formative inquiry is about *the need for humility*, “We are useless servants, what do we think we can do?”²³. Humble

17 Cf. Sheila Grimwood, *A Portrait of Teresa of Avila from her letters* (Faversham: St. Albert Press, 2016), 40-41.

18 *Life* 5:2.

19 *Life* 4:4.

20 *Moradas* VII 1:1.

21 Cf. Susan Muto, “Inquiry As a Spiritual Quest: Teresa As Guide,” *Spiritual Life* 49:1 (2003), 44-52.

22 *Vida/Life* 8:8.

23 *Life* 12:11.

souls depend on God for everything. Teresa says that "the Lord desires us to recognize our uselessness and *become like the little donkeys* that turn the waterwheel:...although their eyes are blinded and they don't know what they are doing, they obtain more water than the gardener does with all his activity"²⁴.

Teresa is a woman of the Church. News of the trouble which *the heretics or Lutherans* in France were causing the church greatly distressed her. As a woman, Teresa cannot do useful things she desires to do in service of the Lord. 'Teresa's aim in her first foundation, that of St. Joseph in Avila, is that she and her sisters are *to pray for the Church and for its captains, the preachers and theologians*."²⁵

In a highly male-dominated society Teresa realized that she is incapable of doing any of the useful things she desires to serve the Lord. Therefore she resolved to do what is in her 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."²⁶

Women in the time of St. Teresa were still downgraded. Repeatedly in her writings Teresa admitted that she is only a woman. The following excerpt of her complaint to the Lord might show this:

"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 speak for myself, because the world already knows my wickedness-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."²⁷

3. Vida : her first major work

Vida is autobiographical, but also doctrinal or a mystagogy of prayer. Her confessors commanded her to write about *the favors and the kind of prayer* the Lord has granted her. But this is her wish that they allowed her to tell very clearly and minutely about her great sins and wretched life. May this account *render the Lord glory and praise*.²⁸

24 *Life* 22:12.

25 *Camino de perfeccion* 1:2 and 3:2.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Way of perfection* 3:7; Cited in Jos Huls, "Sinking away in God's Gaze," *Carmelus* 62 (2015), (131-152) 133.

28 Cf. *Vida/Life*, Prologue 1-2.

Chs.1-10 is about her 'wretched' life before her conversion²⁹. From her own experience she gives the following advice: "It is that in spite of any wrong who practice prayer does, he must not abandon prayer since it is the means by which he can remedy the situation; and to remedy it without prayer would be much more difficult."³⁰

Then she proceeds to explain about the four degrees of prayer (*Life* 11-22). There are four degrees of prayer to become the servants of love. The subject is very difficult to explain especially for Teresa as a woman and has not gone through studies. She has to find some mode of explanation and that is through comparison. The beginner has to realize that to give delight to the Lord he is starting *to cultivate a garden on very barren soil*, full of abominable weeds. With the help of God,

"let us see now how *it must be watered* so that we may understand *what* we have to do, the labor this will cost us, whether the labor is greater than the gain, and *for how long* it must last. It seems to me the garden can be watered in four ways, You may draw water from a well, ...Or you may get it by means of a water wheel and aqueducts, ...Or it may flow from a river and a stream... Or the water may be provided by a great deal of rain."³¹

Then Teresa proceeds with her long explanation about the four ways of watering the garden or the four stages of prayer *to be servants of love*(*Vida* 11-22).

Vida/Life 23-31 is about mystical life especially about locutions³² and visions³³. Her explanation was very beneficial for me when I have to study the classical prophets as recipients of divine revelation, ecstatic visions and auditions.

She has not only received the favours of God of visions, locutions, levitations and ecstasies, but also has a gift for understanding her own experiences and of sharing that understanding.³⁴ The following is an excerpt of her own words:

"for it is one grace *to receive* the Lord's favor; another *to understand* which favor and grace it is; and a third *to know how to describe and explain* it. And although no

29 Cf. Berthold Anton Pareira, "Otobiografi Teresia dari Yesus: Kisah Kerahiman Allah," in Gregorius Pasi-Peter B. Sarbini (ed.), *Dosa dan Pengampunan: Pergulatan Manusia dengan Allah* (Seri Filsafat Teologi Widya Sasana; vol26 No. Seri 25 (Malang: STFT Widya Sasana, 2016), 207-219; Carole Slade, *St. Teresa of Avila*, 65-83.

30 *Vida/Life* 8:5.

31 *Vida/Life* 11:7.

32 *Life* 19:9 (the first time); 24:5, "no longer do I want you to converse with men but with angels...and these words were spoken to me *deep within the spirit*".

33 On the subject of women and vision, cf. Gillian .W. Ahlgren, *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity*, 97-99, 139-140, 156-159.

34 Cf. especially *Life* 23-26, 27-29, 30-31.

more than the first grace seems necessary, it is a great advantage and a gift for the soul that it also understand the favor so as not to go about confused and afraid-so that it become more courageous in following the path of the Lord, trampling under its feet all worldly things. Each one of these graces is a reason for him to praise the Lord greatly and, also, for him who may not receive it to praise Him because His Majesty gave it to one of the living so that that person might help the rest of us.”³⁵

One of the most well-known of his description is The Transverberation of the Heart. Teresa described the vision as following:

“The Lord wanted me while in this state to see sometimes the following vision: I saw close to me toward my left side an angel in bodily form. I don’t usually see angels in bodily form except on rare occasions; although many times angels appear to me, but without my seeing them, as in the intellectual vision I spoke about before.³⁶ This time, though, the Lord desired that I see the vision in the following way: the angel was not large but small; he was very beautiful, and his face was so aflame that he seemed to be one of those very sublime angels that appear to be all afire. They must belong to those they call cherubim, for they did not tell me their names... I saw in his hands a large golden dart and at the end of the iron tip there appeared to be a little fire. It seemed to me this angel plunged the dart several times into my heart and that it reached deep within me. When he drew it out, I thought he was carrying off with him the deepest part of me and he left me all on fire with great love of God. The pain was so great that it made me moan, and the sweetness this greatest pain was so superabundant that there is no desire to taking it away; nor is the soul content with less than God. The pain is not bodily but spiritual, although the body doesn’t fail to share in some of it, and even in great deal. The loving exchange that takes place between the soul and God is so sweet that I beg Him in His goodness to give a taste of this love to anyone who think I am lying.”³⁷

Teresa calls her soul wounded by love: “You hide yourself from me and afflict me with Your love through a death so delightful that the soul would never want to escape from it.”³⁸

Teresa is a woman who from her childhood was fond of reading books³⁹. She “was an avid reader of most of the spiritual treatises then available in the vernacular. Despite her inability to read Latin and the lack of training in the scholastic method of universities, Teresa had cer-

35 *Life* 17:5.

36 *Life* 27:2;28:4.

37 *Life* 29:13; cf. *Moradas* VI 2:4. On the influence of this vision in the icon, cf. Edeltraud Klueting, “Ikonen der Spiritualität des Karmel: Peter Paul Rubens’ Darstellungen Teresas von Avila und ihre Vorbilder,” *Carmelus* 60 (2013), 47-100.

38 *Vida* 29:8.

39 *Life* 2:1; 6:4;12:6;13:12. Later in her life she emphasized the importance of reading for her nuns: “This sustenance for the soul is in some way as necessary as is food for the body” (*Constitutions*, art.8).

tainly read as much as many of her better versed confessors, perhaps more.”⁴⁰

Her narrative theology or the narration of her life is a reflection of her life *in the light of Scripture*. For Teresa Scripture is a book of life. She can see her life reflected in many of the biblical passages especially in some biblical personages as Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan woman, St. Peter and St. Paul.⁴¹ Her own *Vida/Life* after her death soon in turn has inspired many devout women and for male clerics “provided helpful tips on how to understand and advise their exceptional female penitents.”⁴²

4. Camino de perfeccion

Her second major work is *Camino de perfeccion* or the Way of perfection. It is the least autobiographical work. The Sisters of the newly founded St. Joseph convent in Avila have asked Teresa to write something on prayer or the spiritual life for them. For Teresa the road to perfection is prayer and we have to journey until the end to drink from the fountain of the water of life or living water (Jn. 4:14).⁴³ Perfection is to receive and to live purely of the love of Christ. It is to surrender to this love.⁴⁴

The first part of this work (chs. 1-18) deals with the *ascetical exigences* of the life of prayer i.e. true humility, detachment from all created things and love for one another (ch. 4:4). The continuation of the book is entirely dedicated to prayer. What Teresa actually wants to discuss is contemplative prayer, but she realizes that not everyone is called to this. It is better not to have qualitative judgment on the different types of prayer and to accept humbly what the Lord in His goodness gives us (ch. 16-18).⁴⁵

The second part (chs. 19-26) deals with some problems of prayer in general: to souls unable to reason with the intellect (ch. 19), consolations in the path of prayer (ch. 20), the end of this divine journey, the importance to begin with great determination and not to pay any attention to obstacles set up by the devil (ch. 21), mental prayer (ch. 22), the reasons

41 Cf. María Pilar Manero Sorolla, “La Biblia en el Carmelo Teresiano Femenino en el Siglo De Oro,” 137-138. There are about 209 references from 23 books of the Old Testament and 420 from the whole New Testament. From the Old Testament the most cited books are the Psalms and the Song of Solomon.

42 Cf. Jodi Bilinkoff, “Touched by Teresa: Readers and Their Responses, 1588-1750,” in Christopher Wilson (ed.), *The Heirs of St. Teresa of Avila* (Washington: ICS/Roma: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2006), (107-122) 117.

43 *Vida/Life* 21:1-6.

44 Cf. Jos Huls, “Sinking away in God’s Gaze,” 135; id., “Prayer as a Process of Surrender,” *Carmel in the World* LIII:3 (2014), 165-184.

45 Jos Huls, “Sinking away in God’s Gaze,” 136.

to begin with determination (ch. 23), how vocal prayer be recited with perfection (ch. 24), vocal prayer and contemplation (ch. 25), a method for recollecting one's mind (ch. 26).

In the third part (chs. 27-42) Teresa explained to her nuns about Our Lord Prayer⁴⁶. Why about the Lord's Prayer? Because it is *the vocal prayer par excellence* and taught by Our Lord Himself. This is what Teresa wrote in the introduction:

"I don't say that I am going to write a commentary on these divine prayers, for I wouldn't dare. Many commentaries have been written; and even if they hadn't been, it would be absurd for me to write one. But I will mention some thoughts on the words of the Our Father. For sometimes, with regard to many books, it seems we lose devotion in the very exercise in which it is so important for us to have devotion. Clearly, when a master teaches something he gets to love his disciple and is pleased if that which he teaches satisfies his pupil and he helps him a great deal to learn the material. The heavenly master will do the same with us."⁴⁷

Teresa's explanation of Our Father is an explanation of a mystic, who can see and sense better than ordinary people the breadth and length, height and depth of the word of Our Lord. She herself acknowledge by the end of her meditation of this prayer that "it never entered my mind that this prayer contained so many *deep secrets*; for now you have seen the entire spiritual way contained in it, from the beginning stages until God engulf the soul and gives it to drink abundantly from the fount of living water, which He says to be found by the end of the way."⁴⁸ Her intellect would be incapable to speak such sublime things, if the Lord has not taught her.⁴⁹

The Lord's Prayer is *sufficient to reach the highest of contemplation*. It is the Lord Himself who taught it to us and who stands by us in this prayer as loving friend. We have to pray it with attention; it is more than the recitation of prayer. If we open ourselves to the movement of this prayer, God will reveal Himself.⁵⁰ Camino de perfeccion is an introduction to contemplative life.

46 Berthold Anton Pareira, *Rekoleksi Teresia dari Yesus (tentang Doa Bapa Kami)*, Sabtu, 18 Oktober 2014, Auditorium Paroki Maria Bunda Karmel Jakarta (16 pages). The fifth recollection in preparation for the Fifth Centenary of the Birth of St. Teresa (1515-2015).

47 *Camino de perfeccion* 21:4; *The Way of Perfection* 21:(4).

48 *The Way of perfection* 42:5.

49 Cf. *ibid.*, 42:6.

50 Cf. Jos Huls, "Sinking away in God's Gaze", 140-146.

5. Moradas del Castillo interior

Moradas del Castillo interior (= *The Interior Castle*) written in 1577 at the age of 62 is a mistagogy to mystical prayer, to the highest mystical union with God⁵¹. It is based on her personal experience. Teresa wrote because she was ordered. The following is what she wrote in the introduction to *Moradas del Castillo interior* (= *The Interior Castle*), her classic on prayer:

“The one who ordered me to write told me that the nuns in these monasteries of our Lady of Mt.Carmel need someone to answer *their questions about prayer* and that he thought they would be better understand *the language used between women*, and that because of the love they bore me they would pay more attention to what I would tell them...and it should be very clear that if I manage to say something well the Sisters will understand that this does not come from me since there would be no foundation for it, *unless the Lord gave it to me(si el Señor por so misericordia no lo da)*; otherwise they would have as little intelligence as I little ability for such things.”⁵²

The basis of this mistagogy is the beauty and dignity of our soul. It is “like a castle made entirely out of a diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms,just as in heaven there are many dwelling places.”⁵³The door of entry to this castle is prayer and reflection.The castle is the symbol of our soul, “and in the center and middle is the main dwelling place where the *very secret exchanges between God and the soul* take place.”⁵⁴

The journey to the center where the King lives involves passing through six “dwelling places” before arriving at the center, the seventh dwelling place.⁵⁵*Moradas* is a theology of the dignity of man created in the image of God⁵⁶. It is based entirely on her experience and is developed to its fullness in this work: “Each one of us has a soul, but since we do not prize souls as is deserved by creatures made in the image of God we do not understand *the deep secrets* that lie in them.”⁵⁷ We are blind. When we become more aware of God’s activity in our life, we want to

51 Berthold Anton Pareira, “*Rekoleksi Teresia dari Yesus, Guru Doa, Moradas 1, 2 dan 3*”, Sabtu 19 Oktober 2013 Auditorium Paroki Maria Bunda Karmel. This is the fourth recollection in preparation for the Fifth Centenary. The first recollection was held in 2010.

52 *Prologue* 4.

53 *Moradas* I 1:1.

54 *Ibid.* I 1:3

55 John Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrims* Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 2.

56 This theology is beautifully expressed in one of her most beautiful poem “*Buscando a Dios*”. A remarkable aspect of this poem is that it speaks from the perspective of God. Teresa lets God speak in the first person: “Soul, you must seek yourself in Me/and in yourself seek Me.” (cf. Jos Huls, “The soul is the house of God-Teresa of Avila,” *Carmel in the World* LIII:3 (2014), 206-215.

57 *Moradas* VII 1:1.

praise and glorify His name with all our heart. "One can say no more-insofar as can be understood- that the soul, I mean the spirit, is made one with God".⁵⁸ For Teresa the seventh dwelling place is too great for her to speak. Therefore she hopes that it may please God to move her pen and give her understanding how she "might say something about the many things to be said and which God reveals to the one whom He places in this dwelling place." Her only intention "is to make known His mercies that His name may be more praised and glorified."⁵⁹

The union with God in this seventh dwelling place "comes about in a different way: our good God now desires to remove the scales from the soul's eyes and let it see and understand, although in a strange way, something of the favor He grants it. When the soul is brought into that dwelling place, the Most Blessed Trinity, all three Persons, through *an intellectual vision* is revealed to it through a certain representation of the truth. First there comes an enkindling in the spirit in the manner of a cloud of magnificent splendor; and these persons are distinct, and *through an admirable knowledge* the soul understands as a most profound truth that all three Persons are one substance and one power and one knowledge and one God alone. It knows in such a way that what we hold by faith, it understands we can say through sight-although the sight is not with the bodily eyes nor with the eyes of the soul, because we are not dealing with an imaginative vision. Here all three Persons communicate themselves to it, speak it, and explain those words of the Lord in the Gospel: that He and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with the soul that loves Him and keeps His commandments."⁶⁰

In one of her *Spiritual Testimony* Teresa wrote: "These three Persons *love* one another, *communicate* with one another, *know* one another."⁶¹

This last Moradas contains four chapters: Ch.1, great favours God grants souls that have entered the seventh dwelling places; ch.2, difference between spiritual union and spiritual marriage; ch.3-4:1-3, the effects of spiritual marriage: strange forgetfulness of self and a great desire to suffer. There is deep interior joy when they are persecuted and love for persecutors, great desire to serve the Lord, a great detachment from everything. "So in this temple of God, in this His dwelling place, He alone and the soul *rejoice together in the deepest silence*"⁶²; 4:4-18, synthesis and

58 *Moradas* VII 2:3. And cf. Hein Blommestijn, "Life Lost in God," *Carmelus* 62 (2015), 109-130.

59 *Moradas* VII 1:1.

60 *Moradas* VII 1:6.

61 *Las Relaciones* 33:3: "Estas Personas se aman y comunican y se conocen."

62 *Moradas* VII 3:11; cf. Ermano del SS. Sacramento, "Le Settime Mansioni," in *Santa Teresa maestra di orazione* (Roma: Istituto di Spiritualità Carmelitani Scalzi, 1963), 221-242.

relecture of the book.⁶³

There are many references and allusions to Holy Scripture in the *Moradas*.⁶⁴ Original and striking metaphors are taken from nature to communicate depth experience. Teresa was writing her own story, her images in narrative.⁶⁵

The writings of Teresa of Jesus were initially attacked by a certain group of Dominicans. They considered her very dangerous to the Church especially because she was a woman who presumed to teach men. A woman who in her claims have *direct communication with God can be regarded as a heretic*. An inquisitor Friar Alonso de la Fuente in August 1589, seven years after the death of Teresa, led the attack with these words (a partial quotation):

“The author of the said books passes it off and recommends it as doctrine revealed by God and inspired by the Holy Spirit; but if in fact the author was that nun whose name is on the title-page, it is a matter *praeter naturam* for her to have written something taught by the angel, because it exceeds a women capacity. In any case it could not have been a good angel, but a bad one, the same one that deceived...Luther and the other leaders of heretics. This being the case, the so-called miracle of the nun Teresa of Jesus, that her body is today intact and uncorrupted, is a fabulous business, either the work of Satan or the invention of heretics.”⁶⁶

I am very much surprised by this attack. I don't know if the above mentioned inquisitor has read the autobiography of the saint. Her autobiography was written under obedience. Teresa was obliged by her confessors to report in writing her unusual and sometimes disconcerting mystical experiences so as to submit all the judgment to professionals.⁶⁷ Her confessors obliged her to go from one confessor to another. These counsellors in turn asked for detailed written information.⁶⁸ The number of

63 Cf. Maximilano Herraiz Garcia, *Introduccion a "Las Moradas"* (Castellon: Centro de Espiritualidad Santa Teresa, 1981), 129; Joel Galanza, "Let us call it another Heaven": A minicourse on the Interior Castle. Seventh Mansion," *Carmel in the World* XXXVIII:3 (1999), 22-28.

64 Cf. Maximiliano Herraiz Garcia, *Introduccion a "Las Moradas"*, 54-55, 62-63, 73-74, 85, 101-102, 125-126, 139-141.

65 John Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrims*, 25-26.

66 Quoted by Elias Rivers, "The vernacular mind of St. Teresa," in *Carmelite Studies Centenary of St. Teresa*, (113-129) 114 from Enrique Llmas Martinez, *Santa Teresa de Jesus y la Inquisition espanola* (Madrid: CSIC, 1972), 396-397; cf. also Gillian T.W. Ahlgren, *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Santity*, 114-144 with the title: Preter Naturam? Posthumous Debates on Teresa's Orthodoxy.

67 The judgment on the manuscript of the *Life* by Fr. Domingo Bañez and Pedro Ibañez are reprinted in Carole Slade, *St. Teresa of Avila*, , 145-148, 149-152.

68 St. Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works*, vol I, *Life*, Introduction, 17-18.

her confessors and spiritual directors are very high at least 23 Jesuits and 30 Dominicans. Five among them were later canonized: Peter of Alcantara, Francis Borgias, John of the Cross, John de Ribera and John of Avila.⁶⁹

Since the time of the apostles women are suspected in regard to *visionary and revelatory experiences*. The apostles did not believe the Easter message of women (cf. Luk 24:8-11,22-24). They are regarded as easily confused.⁷⁰ But Miriam and Aaron have already a question: "Has the Lord spoken only to Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" (Num.12:2).⁷¹

6. Conclusion

Teresa is a great theologian. She is a woman of great wisdom, a woman with a burning desire to see God. She makes us realize of the presence of God in the heaven of the soul. There is nothing comparable to the magnificent beauty of a soul and its marvelous capacity. God has created us in His own image and likeness. *It is a shame and unfortunate that through our fault we don't understand ourselves or know who we are*⁷². We are called to become one with God. The door to the dwelling of God is prayer. One can say that in *Moradas* Holy Scripture is the soul of her theology. References to Scripture are found in every dwelling places. The word of God has already penetrated the soul of Teresa (cf. Heb. 4:12).

What is her legacy? What does it all mean for us? For me the greatest legacy of St. Teresa is her *praise of prayer*. Her works are a true mystagogy of prayer. There is nothing so important as prayer. It is the way to perfection.⁷³ St. Teresa never tired reminding us: "that we will never come to love our neighbor perfectly, if that does not rise from the love of God as its root."⁷⁴

69 Ludovico Saggi, "Santa Teresa <<Carmelitana>>," *Carmelus* 18 (1971), (42-63) 46.

70 Cf. Gillian T.W. Ahlgren, *Teresa of Avila*, 7-8, 55-56, 97-104.

71 Cf. Berthold Anton Pareira, "Sungguhkah Tuhan berbicara dengan pengantaraan Musa saja?," in Merry Teresa Sri Rejeki-Agung Wahyudianto (eds.), *Geliat Membela Martabat Perempuan* (Seri Filsafat Teologi Widya Sasana; vol. 16 No. Seri 15; Malang:STFT Widya Sasana, 2006), 79-88.

72 *Moradas* I 1:2.

73 Cf. Anastasio del SS. mo Rosario, "Santa Teresa Maestra di orazione," in *Santa Teresa maestra di orazione*, 243-269; Giovanna della Croce, "Le caratteristiche del dottorato di Santa Teresa d'Avila," *Carmelus* 18 (1971), 5-20.

74 *Moradas* V 3:9. Cf. "A Message for the Year of Consecrated Life" from Fernando Millan Romeral O.Carm. Prior General-Saverio Cannistra.OCD, Superior General, *CITOC* magazine V-No. 2-2015, (28-31), n. 5.

We thank God for having given us St. Teresa of Jesus as a guide on the path of perfection.

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