

Research Assembly Plenary  
June 21, 1973

### ST. JOHN AND SANCTIFICATION

Before I look at the lectures, I must orient us in the Dark Night of The Soul. The dramaturgical chart of the Dark Night of the Soul looks like this. The bottom is the Final Union and the top is the Second Night. That's my chart of the whole Second Night, and you will notice that Chapters one, two, and three are simply introductory. Chapter twenty-five is the conclusion, and I struggled a long time with whether it ought not be twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four and twenty-five or twenty-three, twenty-four, and twenty-five in terms of the internal structure of the book. I am insecure at that point yet. The rest of the book, it seems to me, is extremely simple. From four through fourteen is the Purgation and from fifteen through twenty-four is the Union. Now this next part is crucial. In the Purgation from four to ten he is dealing with the Intellect. You have to go back to Plato and Aristotle, to Anselm and Thomas Aquinas, and of course many others, in order to get their operating construct of the psyche. If you want to, you can throw in the memory and so on, but that is fooling with detail, since it is not part of his master operating image. The memory is part of the Intellect. In four to ten he deals with the mind and in eleven through fourteen he deals with the will. Now that gives you a very, very simple construct of what appeared to me to be one of the most complex books I ever looked into. You do not have to agree with me on this particular chart, but when you get something like it you own the book.

Now let me finish the chart. This section, then, is from four through ten and this is eleven through fourteen, and this last one is fifteen through twenty-five. Now in each case here, you have the intellect and the will. The only important chapters in the first section are five and six. If you grasp that, you own him. The only important chapter in the will's section is eleven. I name these sections something like "The Darkening of the Intelligence" and "The Regeneration of the Will" in the ladder part.

Now you've got some leftovers which are fine and important chapters. They are chapters nine and ten. They do not belong where he's got them so to speak. In nineteen and twenty, he's telling you what Union is, while in nine and ten he's dealing with the dynamics of the Union. And in ten he is dealing with the dynamics of Union relative to the Will and Intelligence, and in Nine he's dealing with the dynamics of the Union relative to the Intelligence and the Will. You see why I drew the chart the way I have in order to put the two Will sections together relative to ten.

If I were going to teach this book, I would begin with five and six. Then I would go to eleven and then to nineteen, then twenty, and then nine and finally, the Burning Log. That's six sessions. If I had to do it in five, I'd pull the Ladder, nineteen and twenty together. Now you don't need to do it this way, but my point is when setting up a course or teaching something, you absolutely take whatever you are going to do to pieces. Then when you put it back together in the course, it must not look like what you took to pieces. That's a pretty good guideline. When you create that course, it has nothing to do with St. John of the Cross' Dark Night of the Soul. It is an art form in itself. Therefore you feel perfectly at liberty to leave chapter 21 about the disguises out. You do not leave it out because it is not exciting and interesting but in order to get the heart of the book, you don't need it. You get the "guts" without it. How do you determine what to leave out when you are doing a job such as that? Though your picture may be different from mine, without that picture, you can't create a course. You are just playing. That is a crucial job to do.

One of the important things that you get is this chart on five and six. If you try to work with his paragraph numbering, you'll never have the book. You have to number them sequentially yourself. I forget how many hundreds are in it, as a whole, but in this section, you start with paragraph fourteen and you go through twenty-six. It is crucial that you see those two chapters as one unit, one chapter. As a matter of fact, John did not divide this thing into chapters; and whoever did, did a bad job. Now when you see the overall structure of it, paragraph sixteen has the same abstract weight as all of the rest of the paragraphs from seventeen to twenty-four. Now that's life or death. If you miss that you'll never get John. In paragraph sixteen, I do not see why John did not have four paragraphs where he had one. He makes you work. He should have had an introduction as he sensibly had in the next section, and then he should have broken sixteen up into three other paragraphs because he

has three things he wants to say. He is describing the pure Intellect in sixteen. You will notice in the rest of five and six, he deals with the great pains, where the Intellect and the Will blend, in Aristotelian psychology or in Thomas Aquinas' concept of virtue. But in principle, he is still dealing with the Intellect in this section, but first with just pure intellect, and then where the Will and the Intellect relate head on. He ends five and six with pure Will.

This section on the Intellect is so consuming, that sometimes I've scarcely remembered my middle name. I woke up one day calling myself Calvin, Joseph Calvin. In the Sanctification lectures, it is crucial we understand what he is saying here. He begins with the awakened person. And if you are not living RS-I, you have not the foggiest notion about sanctification. I do not mean just when you are intellectually able to go out and teach one of these ridiculous courses, but when you have started to live RS-I, to breath it out your pores in the midst of living your lucidity, your mind suddenly experiences a foreign image, an absolutely foreign, alien and paradoxical image. Now your mind has had many varieties of images, but at the moment that this other image appears, it is filled. Any lucid man finds it the most unbelievable and totally alien image. That is John's first point. The second point is that it is an imposing image. Now that is all soft-sell. What language do you use? It is a hateful image! It is a takeover image! Can you not see yourself encountering that alien image and discovering it is a Martian who has decided to take over the earth. That is what he means by imposing. I cannot stand imposing people, because they threaten my intent to be imposing too. That is his second one. You are not fooling with a Boy Scout troop here. You think Mr. Hitler was something. I tell you when you get that image burned into your skull, you have a Hitler in your midst. That is what he means by imposing. It is a Genghis Khan in your midst, and he is taking over. His third point is like this but it is different. The image is overwhelming. Now his point here is that you pull out your sword and you say, "Over my dead body are you going to impose yourself upon my neat little internal universe." Your knees collapse. And you discover yourself submitting. (Falls down and lays on floor). How do you like that for cabaret? You are whelmed over. You capitulate. That is the Intellect. He wants to show you what it means to have your mind burned over. A figure's been with me a long time with John: it is a burned-over forest. The image burned your mind out. And mind you that image is not dealing with just anybody. It is dealing with me and I am a lucid man. That is all in paragraph sixteen.

Then he takes the rest of those paragraphs to spell out the great pains. You have to have the plural, pains, not pain. The great, great pains. Now you have another chart which is crucial, I believe. He is into the dimension of the connotative part of the soul here, or you could not use the word "pain." But his emphasis is on the Intellect, not on the affective dimension of the soul. Going down the side of the chart is a sentence which is trying to describe this experience in the abstract. Now, before, it was just the impact of the image which did this and that. Now he is discussing the unique qualities of the image. "The quality of the image creates an awareness of a sense of, with a feeling of, being. . ." You probably can improve on that abstract sentence, but did you notice that his writing of these paragraphs was so complex that you almost lost your mind? You would think you had it and then the next day you would see things in there that you never dreamed of. Day after day after day that happened.

Now the most important thing on this chart, after that abstraction, are these words across the top. He is saying that this is a pure image. You must get rid of your moralism here, for it is all ontological. "Pure" means it is a singular and simple image. It is just like a sharp blade with no rough spots on it. No ifs, ands, maybes, buts, or nothings. And then that does something to you. I'll come back to it. The next quality is power, sheer power. And the third image is finality. Now if you have noticed that all of these are the same, you are right. It is like he is looking on each side of four posts to really grasp the experience. It is finality And you have no appeal. This is in no wise an intellectual process. You scream out, "HELP!" and there isn't anybody that can hear you because there is nothing beyond this image. You scream out, "To hell with you!" and you have no ground on which to say to hell with it. This image is final. Now you are not doing metaphysics here; you are doing phenomenology. It is your "guts" that cry. Your guts cry to your mind and the damned thing is burnt out! Finally, in the last quality, that unbelievable image swaggers around inside of you like it owned the universe - which it does. Majesty. The Divine. The Majesty of the Divine. When we experience that majesty in awe, we grasp our ignobility, our lowliness, our creatureliness, our total wretchedness, our insignificance and yes, more than that, our self-abomination. In the midst of our lucidity, it is like being aridified. Baked. Drained. Somebody pulled the stopper out. What a description of the intrusion of that image. If you do not take that chart, you need your own to grasp the complexity of that passage. It is extremely difficult. While the mind is being burned out, John uses the

word "contemplation." An "alien contemplation"? My freedom to work with John occurred when I saw what he may mean by "alien contemplation" what I mean by an "image." The key to the part on the will with the three great sicknesses is the experience of awe. If you and I do not ground this section empirically at every point, we are lost. It seemed to take me years before I was able to ground it and then one day it dawned on me that he was talking about awe. In the midst of your mind being burnt out, you notice way down here in your bowels, your guts, you feel, shall I call it a tickle? The first little flicker of awe. That is the transparent glow. You say, "I love this woman, I love this man," and God, that is really something. Then one day you talk about loving that which is beyond all men, beyond all women, beyond all that is. How do you talk about it? Awe. Fear and Fascination. I am not quite sure how you decide you are in love with a woman. But I am clearer now what constitutes the empirical stuff out of which I begin to define for myself what it means to love God. It is the awe. You are sure you never sat down and decided to love God; you can't make the awe come. It comes.

Remember through John that you have no association with that alien imposing overwhelming image and his Awe. But you and I watching that Aweful One, go through this and see the connection. And this little tickle of Awe, after you pray night and day, that Aweful One who first gave you any indication of what that tickle was by calling it awe, you wish him dead. Because this little, at first seeming so innocent, hunk of awe destroys every single affection you ever had. You and I get up and teach intellectually that you have to give up your family, your children, your position, your theology, your church, and your nation. This little hunk of awe begins to do it for you. Do you get the picture? It spreads like a cancer. You didn't know you were so damned attached to your children. You didn't know you were so attached to this Order, until that cancer hits. Can't you see it just spreading, spreading, eating away like acid every last attachment you had to everything until you are literally consumed with the love of God, the Awe?

I always wondered where Armageddon was. Now I've found the battle. You think it is just over-eating. No. I mean it is unto death. No quarter, no quarter. You wonder why it takes so long, because there is no quarter. Every last affection you ever had goes. It may take twenty years but it is going to go. And there is nothing you can do to stop it. You are talking about humanness here, not some nice idea.

Now, the ladder, that part is the clearest part of John. He didn't need much help on that one. The one on the intellect is much, much harder to grasp. Now the ladder. You need to look at that chart on the ladder. At number Ten you step off the ladder. If you think of Kierkegaard's despair, the first is abstract. Sheer naivete is abstract. Anything in this life is naivete minus one. And the sheer demonism of the other extreme in the despair can only be grasped by Satan, Adam and Satan. Remember the format in Kierkegaard's despair. Despair. This is the same thing. Number Ten is off in space. I liked the circus. I thought of the balancers who climb a ladder and then that last moment, step over to come down the other side. I believe that I saw one guy who got up on that last step and just stood there. Did I ever see that? Well, it is like that. Off into nothing. This is going to heaven, that last step.

Anne Slicker was helpful on the first step. She said that the first step on that ladder is getting in to Sanctification itself. It is the swoon. Once you put your foot on that first step, she said, you can never fall off it. And the rest of the ladder you just go up and down the rest of your life. Do you see that? Then, being a first-rate theologian, she said, "Now, of course you can fall off but that is another question." It is a damn good one. However you relate justification and sanctification; once sanctification has happened, you can never fall back into justification. You can only become an apostate. Wesley held it in this way - that it might take you twenty years to build up the structure of Sanctification in your being but you could fall out of it in one second by doubting the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, or the Word. That is the way he handled Anne's issue that she brought up. You cannot fall back into Justification. The relationship is such that that is an impossibility. You can only become apostate. Once you see that, you are a way down the line on the structure.

Let me say some more relative to the intellect and the will. First, attachment to God and second, finding meaning everywhere. Then a la Chairman Mao, this drives you into attachment, which attachment illuminates meaning. Hear Jesus, "And if you do not believe me, believe me for my very work's sake." I tell you that was a bear trap he set. That moves into the ultimate or the intensification of that. These two, that engagement, that service, turn into absolute cruciform existence.

Do you sense the difference in you in the last six months? For a long time you have been dedicated to what we sometimes too loosely call the mission of this Order. The last six months, somehow without a decision you woke up and discovered that your life was there, period. On the other side of having exerted every single power you had, you had to get out of the mission. At that moment you knew that you were a dead man. I mean dead! Finished! That is when total consumption comes back to meaning. Hey! This isn't the Dark Night; this is the glory of union I have been describing. This is terrible but it is glorious! The moment you assume responsibility for the globe you become aware of a terrible glorious power down inside of you. It is the power of love. Love is a power! It is a frightening experience. It has been there all along, but now it is loose.

I tell you we have reduced the Christian faith to the feminine for many years. I am not talking against women. Even though St. John itself as a whole is a female principle, within it it has the male and the female. What you have been experiencing is the masculine dimension of the deep realities of the Christian faith. It is kicking the stuffing out of you, and if you were not a man, you would not be here. All of us are milquetoasts at heart. Then you stumble on yourself doing things you would not have believed possible. That hits like seizure. And do you know whom you are seizing? GOD! That motivity reaches the sacreligious edge of seizing the Mystery itself. And then it is mine. No one needs to come along and tell you that you are a presence. You become the very presence of the Mystery.

As dear Anne said, it's an up and down, Jacob's ladder, in which the angels are ascending and descending. Slicker pointed out that it is more like an electric grid because we do not live in an architectonic universe. Every morning when you get up, Anne says, you are not off the ladder but you have to turn on the current. Yesterday four light bulbs out of the ten were burning in me, and when I got up this morning there might not have been any save number one and that might have been low. Tomorrow it may be six.

Now before I get to Sanctification, there is a chart Slicker did in which he attempts to relate the dark night experience to this directly. You need to study this very carefully.