



**FACULTAD DE TEOLOGÍA
INSTITUTO UNIVERSITARIO DE ESPIRITUALIDAD**

THE VIRTUE OF HUMILITY IN SAINT TERESA OF JESUS

By

Titus Waita Kimeu, OCD

Director:

Prof. Dr. Juan Antonio Marcos, OCD

Madrid, mayo 2015



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DEDICATION

“To the loving memory of my dear younger brother Alexander Mbatha,
with whom I lived shortly passing away in 1991”

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ABBREVIATIONS

WORKS OF SAINT TERESA OF JESUS

C (CV) Camino de Perfección (Manuscrito de Valladolid).

CC Cuentas de Conciencia.

E Exclamaciones

F Fundaciones.

M Moradas o Castillo Interior (1M, 2M... 7M...Primeras Moradas, Segundas Moradas...
7M 4,8: séptima morada, capítulo 4, número 8).

P Poesías.

MC Meditación de los Cantares.

R Relaciones.

V Libro de la Vida.

Cta Cartas

Throughout this dissertation, all the Teresian texts will be quoted from: TERESA DE JESUS, Obras completas, (Introducción y notas de TOMÁS ÁLVAREZ), Burgos 1994.

WORKS OF SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

CB Cántico Espiritual (segunda redacción).

LB Llama de Amor Viva (segunda redacción).

N Noche Oscura.

S Subida del Monte Carmelo

Throughout this dissertation, all the texts on St. John of the Cross will be quoted from: SAN JUAN DE LA CRUZ, Obras completas, (Introducción y notas de EULOGIO PACHO), Monte Carmelo, Burgos 1993.

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

BAC Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos.

GS Constitución Pastoral Gaudium et spes.

The abbreviations that we will use to designate biblical books are adopted from The New Jerusalem Bible, (HENRY WANSBROUGH ed.), VV.AA, Doubleday & Company New York, 2004.

INTRODUCTION

The virtue of humility being one of the virtues that has been so much discussed in the history of Christianity, today it is very difficult to understand it at a theoretical as well as a practical level, in a world where the human person has had an exaggerated view or regard for self, immersed in the continuous search of self-affirmation. The zeal for self-sufficiency and for personal autonomy, favored today by technology, accompanied by self-delusion has led many people to adopt an attitude of independence from everything, including God, excluding the personal dimension of this same virtue.

On the other hand, we realize that it is a virtue/value that is unappreciated in the culture of the contemporary society. As such, today humility requires a rehabilitation since it has been confused with humiliation; more than a few times it has been reduced into being solely the acknowledgement of one's own misery, sin and self-contempt.

Because of this misunderstanding, humility is viewed as inimical to healthy psychological development and as a barrier to self-transcendence. Some studies have undertaken the task and strive to give this virtue a more positive and attractive appearance. In order to explore on this theme, this dissertation will examine the virtue of humility in the Teresian spirituality, underscoring its main facets, in order to arrive at the fact that, although it is a virtue less valued, it still has a role to play and can act as a reminder of the call of the human person to rediscover his being, and his destiny to unite himself with God. The following chapters will discuss this virtue as a journey through the progressive spiritual interiorization of the person to the ultimate union with God.

Chapter One puts into focus the various inspirational influences in the life Teresa in her writing on the precious virtue. They range from the scriptural inspirations as well as the fathers of the Church to which she would have had access. To undertake this, we will run a diachronic journey through the history of theology and spirituality seeking to recognize how different authors, theologians and saints have addressed this theme. The aim is to briefly uncover their contribution and what Teresa may have benefitted and absorbed from them, enriching her spirituality with it as well as her way of interiorization. Though being brief considerations and at the same time highly concentrated, they are accompanied by sufficient documentary support and a selected bibliography, from which they will open us in part, to the Teresian work and the

spirituality of the XVI century. Here we only consider some of the persons who had an impact on the life of Teresa, some of whom were her contemporaries as well as her predecessors; also not forgetting the fact that we cannot exhaust the many influences in her life.

Teresa drew a lot of richness from all these fountains, from these authors and their works, from whom she demonstrates that they were an inexhaustible fount of knowledge and enlightenment. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that her main source of knowledge was her life itself and the contact and relationship with the men and women of her time. Real life experience was her great ‘teacher’ of the woman and writer Teresa. The historical choice of these characters follows this criterion: that is, their relationship with Teresa, in a special way in which they guided her prayer life, in her work as founder and in her doctrine as a writer, up to the point of developing humility as *walking in the truth*, which involves principally self-knowledge.

Chapter Two examines the central theme of our research: humility as walking in truth and self-knowledge. According to Teresa, it is not only the foundation for spiritual life, but it is in fact indispensable for the journey to God. The foundation of our survey would be her interior experience just as it is incorporated in her writings. The study will follow closely the genesis of thought and work of Teresa of Jesus and will bring into light the constant points of her message as a progressive enrichment. We will therefore demonstrate the interest of the present understanding of the Teresian theological message of true humility.

We will analysis it in its relationship with other virtues in, for instance the theological as well as some other Christian virtues, not forgetting its relationship with prayer, which is Teresa’s other crucial theme. We believe that St. Teresa integrates humility in the entire Christian life such that it would not be authentic if any virtue were practiced ignoring humility. Therefore, this part aims to consider at greater length the elements to which Teresa attaches greater importance, which will allow us to form some full and fair idea of this virtue. In order to concretize our study, we will consider humility in her human development that will present the picture of a life well lived under the influence of the virtue.

In doing so, we will be underlining the vital significance that the various Teresa’s writings form in this chapter. There is no doubt that there are many important aspects that would be very useful in our investigation in a personality as rich as that of Teresa. However, the boundaries and the goals of our study lead us to focus only on some of them that we consider salient and fundamental to truth and self-knowledge.

In Chapter Three of our research, starting from the experience of St Teresa we ask ourselves if it is possible for man today to make himself available for the action of grace in view of humility, walking in the truth which encompasses self-knowledge. We pose the question: what importance would the study the humility have in the XXI century? What could a study like this contribute to a world of an exaggerated view or regard for self, immersed in the continuous search of self-affirmation, the zeal for self-sufficiency and for personal autonomy?

We have no doubt that it has a role to play, and so in this respect we will make a few simple proposals that aim to help prepare the human person for the action of grace. This does not mean that man would know the truth of himself over night; what we want is to encourage man to live fully his commitment as a person and humanly be found disposed for the action of grace, as God wills.

It is my understanding that the real reason for this barrier, however, is that the dominant themes in today's world, which include; ambition, greed, wealth and personal gratification, are in counterpoint to the traditional definition of humility as espoused by Teresa. To practice humility therefore, is to assume a counter-cultural stance against a modern world that encourages arrogance and self-actualization at the expense of others and regardless of the moral rightness of cultivating humility; the fact that it is against the dominant culture means that we struggle to develop it. The risk of going against the dominant culture results in an increasing resistance to the spiritual call.

We believe that a study of this kind can help us rediscover the profound link between the action of God and the human person, and could provide us with insights into how both are mutually accustomed to fit exactly into each other and create a different human reality a new man without losing his uniqueness and personal identity. In addition, an investigation of this type can bring keys to open new paths of study.

The elaboration of this research has presented some difficulties. The first and most pressing one was to find a common thread that passes through all the work. It was not easy to integrate the various sections and topics, and define each one of them. I know that even now, despite the efforts made, it is possible to find some kind of digression or repetitions. We have put into use the descriptive-analytic method starting from the Teresian sources and readings and basing the research on the texts that St. Teresa herself has offered us. On the other hand, the availability of previous studies on the theme of research serves as a strong support for the work.

Finally, I recognize that the approach to the proposals in the last chapter of the investigation has not been easy. With this breadth therefore, the idea has been that they could be useful to any kind of person wishing to know themselves in the light of God and live a life of holiness. For this reason, these proposals could not incorporate any religious reference, for example, and should be raised in such a way that at least they would be able to arouse the interest of man of the twenty first century. The study has done everything possible to formulate proposals with these characteristics and I am convinced that its breadth is not limited to its validity; I feel that the effort made has its value. I have every confidence in the capacity of man's development as well as his vocation to humanize, accepting and exercising what is in his very nature to bring it to fullness. I am convinced that this is also a way to God.

CHAPTER I

FOUNDATIONS AND SOURCES OF INSPIRATION IN ST. TERESA OF JESUS

Introduction

We could pose the question: where did St. Teresa of Jesus draw all the treasure for her doctrine on the virtues, and in this case, the virtue of humility? Undoubtedly, it came from her personal knowledge and experience, her cultural and spiritual formation, her contact and readings from the works of the church fathers, her dealings with the great masters of theology and spirituality of the day and her usual intense discipline and contemplation.

The purpose of this chapter therefore, is to explore the various inspirational influences in the life of Teresa in her writing on the precious theme of the virtue of humility. The aim is to draw with precision each of the figures to uncover their contribution, though briefly, on the virtue of humility in the history of spirituality and its influence on the life of Teresa of Jesus. Though being brief considerations and at the same time highly concentrated, they are accompanied by a selected bibliography, from which they will open us in part, to the Teresian work and the spirituality of the XVI century.

The historical choice of these characters follows this criterion: that is, their relationship with Teresa, in a special way in which they guided her prayer life, in her work as founder and in her doctrine as a writer, up to the point of developing humility as *walking in the truth*¹, which involves principally self-knowledge. Some of them were for her figures of the distant past which she discovered with partial reading of their writings when she was faced with troubles or for the urge to satisfy specific spiritual needs. Others are her contemporaries, friends in the strict sense of the word, teachers of doctrine and life, with whom sometimes she maintained a close relationship.

Teresa drew a lot of richness from all these fountains; that is, the authors and their works, which next I am going to explore in this chapter, demonstrating that they were an inexhaustible fount of knowledge and enlightenment. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that her main source of knowledge was her life itself and the contact and relationship with the men and women of her time. Real life experience was her great 'teacher' of the woman and writer Teresa: her

¹ "Humildad es andar en verdad" (6M 10, 7).

own family, friendships, relationships with people of every class and social status in the Ávila of sixteenth century.

From them all she learned the great truths about God, and especially about the humble truth and reality of man and the world. Teresa is unquestionably a genius in dealing with people from whom she learns and who learn from her, at the same while teaching them. Here it is worth noting that, although Teresa sought to enrich herself with the knowledge of the learned people, she also converted herself into a ‘teacher’ to them, as she always instilled a deep spiritual impact on the people that she consulted and encountered. Before embarking on various inspirational sources, we will initiate this chapter by first defining the word ‘humility’, that will provide us with a general understanding of this virtue.

1.1. Humility: positive and negative definition

The Word Humility is derived from the Latin term *humus*, which is translated as “earth or soil”², and is an antidote to pride³. Its meaning therefore, is ‘lowly’ or lowliness. In classical Latin, the word is always used in a pejorative sense, applied to things, it means undistinguished, unimportant, insignificant, when used in reference to persons⁴. The *Diccionario de la teología moral* defines it as “la actitud que reconoce el valor limitado de la persona y que actúa de acuerdo con esta realidad”⁵. It is also referred to as, the disposition to estimate and adjust rightly the conduct of oneself⁶ in the line of this the estimation. Thus, humility takes in mind understanding and will.

On the other hand, humility is rooted in “the truth of reality”⁷. It is grounded in the deep awareness of our limitations and shortcomings in the presence of the divine perfection, and of our sinfulness in the presence of God; it leads us to a profound sense of total dependence on God and to an ardent desire to do God’s will in all things. It implies therefore grasping the truth about ourselves and about God. According to the *Diccionario de espiritualidad*, humility is defined as

² WILLIAM H. SHANNON, *Humility*, in: *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, (Ed. M. DOWNEY), Collegeville-Minnesota, The Liturgical Press 2009, 516.

³ ELIZABETH A. DREYER, *Humility*, in: *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, (Ed. PHILIP SHELDRAKE), SCM Press, London 2005, 349.

⁴ *Ib.*

⁵ AURELIO FERNÁNDEZ, *Humildad, virtud cristiana*, in: *Diccionario de la teología moral*, Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2004, 689.

⁶ KARL HÖRMANN, *Humildad*, in: *Diccionario de Moral Cristiana*, Biblioteca Herder, Barcelona 1997, 546.

⁷ WILLIAM H. SHANNON, *o.c.*, 516.

a moral virtue “que frena al alma para que no tienda con movimiento inmoderado a lo que está por encima de ella”⁸, or better, it is a virtue “que frena el deseo desordenado de la propia grandeza y conduce al hombre al amor de su propia realidad conocida a la luz de una verdad sincera”⁹. That having been said then, it means that one has to discover the true nature of humility in its functioning of moderation of selfness and pride, which is a deviation from two tendencies put by God in human nature, that is, self-esteem, and the desire to estimating the other people. “La primera es la base de la dignidad personal; el segundo es uno de los fundamentos de la sociabilidad”¹⁰. Humility has the mission to oppose these deviations and maintain order in the proper estimation and the desire of the estimation of the other people.

However, genuine humility is not to be confused with humiliation since “it does not involve rejection, hatred of oneself or lack of self-esteem and assertiveness. It does not demand that one become a doormat. Rather, humility is linked with the truth about oneself and the world. To be humble is to accept one’s creatureliness, gifts and sinfulness. Both reason and psychological knowledge can be assets in discovering one’s true self, but humility is ultimately the fruit of openness to God’s generous love and mystery”¹¹.

In exploring humility, there are at least two approaches one could take. One might seek to determine whether the quality of humility is a virtue and therefore conducive to human fulfillment or a vice and an obstacle to fulfillment. In the present chapter, I assume that humility is in fact a virtue. My project is of the second kind: it is an exploration of the nature of that virtue and of its role in the life of the human person. Great Christian writers throughout the centuries have described the virtue of humility in many ways. This chapter will touch on just a few of them.

Given these definitions then, humility works at two levels in discernment: at the first level humility is a kind of base line or a first-order comparative self-assessment in any realm of activity. This kind of self-assessment occurs continuously in human life, in all sorts of situations. Humility invites us to be aware of the gifts and virtues of others, especially when we do possess them ourselves. The acquisition of particular skills or virtues requires first, the awareness that one does not yet have them. Only then can we become diligent in acting to achieve those goals.

⁸ S.GATTO, *Humildad*, in: *Diccionario de Espiritualidad*, (Ed. ERMANN ANCELLI) II, Herder, Barcelona 1983, 267.

⁹ *Ib.*

¹⁰ WILLIAM H. SHANNON, o.c., 267.

¹¹ ELIZABETH A. DREYER, o.c., 349.

The second level is a special case of humility in general. It is an underpinning for the acquisition of all virtue. We see this when we look for models of moral rightness. Humility, in calling us to look beyond ourselves to understand where we fit, “thus becomes an essential first specification, a first particular moral virtue, practiced so that other virtues may be acquired”¹². It becomes therefore, a virtue, which accompanies all other virtues.

Basically, the meaning and function of humility as a virtue has been lost. Humility has become the victim of misdefinition or interpretation: it has been mistaken for its own act. Humility has commonly been “confused with the act of self-abasement or minimizing one’s own capacities or achievements”¹³.

Thomas Aquinas says for instance, that, the first step of humility is to acknowledge oneself “la humildad se ocupa preferentemente de la reverencia debida a Dios como subditos”¹⁴. I maintain that the self-lowering associated with humility is best understood not as the end of the virtue itself, but as a “counter-balance toward a normal human tendency to self-celebration”¹⁵. Humility acts to regulate the appetite of the intellect for self-aggrandizement. For most people in most circumstances, the task of humility in perfecting that appetite is to limit or restrain the appetite from excess. Mistaking humility for its act is a basic confusion about the nature of virtue. Virtue is a realized habitual disposition to behave in accord with the dictates of practical reason. The intellectual virtue of prudence discerns the mean of virtue between contrary vicious extremes: the pull of the appetite opposing humility tends toward self-aggrandizement. In most circumstances, the tendency is toward excessive self-focus rather than excessive self-abnegation. Given that basic pull, a person wishing to acquire humility might practice self-abasement opposing the drive to self-aggrandizement, in order to approach the virtuous mean¹⁶.

1.2. Scripture

The study on scripture readings occupies a special place in the entire enterprise of St. Teresa. It is for her the principal source of her life and doctrine. I am referring to the actual text of the Bible, the Gospels and reading that she sought to incorporate as her life, as well as its contribution towards the drafting of her works. Her reading leads us to the person of Christ, the

¹² LISA FULLAN, *The virtue of Humility. A Thomistic apologetic*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston 2009, 3.

¹³ *Ib.*, 4-5.

¹⁴ *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 161. a. 3.

¹⁵ LISA FULLAN, *The virtue of Humility*, o.c., 4.

¹⁶ *Ib.*

‘Interior Master’, his ‘Living Book’. This subject has been addressed extensively in serious and comprehensive studies. I will address here only three figures: First, exploring the role and environment of the study of the bible in the sixteenth century, especially as pertains to women; the exemplary humility as *kénosis* in Jesus Christ as is presented by St. Paul, and finally humility in the *Magnificat* in the person of the Virgin Mary.

1.2.1. Teresa and the Bible

The scripture¹⁷ serves for St. Teresa as a source of great inspiration. Reading St. Teresa, one realizes that scripture occupies a special place, as the power-house for her life and doctrine. I am actually referring to the biblical texts, the Gospels and readings she has made to live them, in support of her mystical experiences, or as help in writing her works. Her reading leads us to the person of Christ, the “*Interior Master*”¹⁸, or *el Libro vivo*¹⁹ through the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who, according to her is the main architect of her writing, her visions, revelations, and other mystical phenomena.

Teresa writes during a difficult time of the *Valdés Index*: “Los hombres, las escrituras montadas por estos, las circunstancias históricas hicieron imposible el acceso de Teresa al texto bíblico”²⁰. Surprisingly Teresa manages to incorporate biblical texts in her writings. What catches the eye here is that, upon reading her works one realizes that he is ‘before some pages of deep and profound biblical inspiration’²¹, and not only in its content, but also whatever has to do with its form.

As to what concerns her love and veneration which Teresa professes about the scripture it’s interesting what favor, her confessor did for her, the canonist of Toledo Dr. Alonso

¹⁷ “En un estudio sobre las ‘lecturas y maestros’ de santa Teresa, ocupa un lugar preferencial, como la fuente de alimentación más abundante de su vida y doctrina, la *Sagrada Escritura*. Me refiero al texto mismo de la *Biblia*, los *Evangelios* y la lectura que ella ha hecho para vivirlos, como soporte de sus experiencias místicas, o como ayuda para la redacción de sus obras. Su lectura le conduce a la persona de Cristo, el ‘Maestro interior’, su ‘Libro vivo’, a la asistencia del Espíritu Santo, según ella el principal artífice de sus escritos, de sus visiones, revelaciones, hablas y otros fenómenos místicos” (DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, Editorial de Espiritualidad, Madrid, 2009, 33).

¹⁸ “Su Majestad fue siempre mi Maestro” (Vida 12, 2).

¹⁹ “Desde a bien pocos días, lo entendí muy bien, porque he tenido tanto en qué pensar y recogerme en lo que veía presente, y ha tenido tanto amor el Señor conmigo para enseñarme de muchas maneras, que muy poca a casi ninguna necesidad he tenido de libros. Su Majestad ha sido el libro verdadero adonde he visto las verdades” (Vida 26, 6).

²⁰ MAXIMILIANO HERRÁIZ, *La palabra de Dios en la vida Teresiana*, in: *Teología espiritual. Facultad de Teología de S. Vicente Ferrer sección Padres Dominicos*, Valencia 1979,19.

²¹ MARIANO HERRANZ MARCO, *Santa Teresa y la Biblia*, in: *Conversaciones de Toledo. Teresa de Jesús IV centenario, Estudio Teólogo de San Ildefonso*, Toledo 1981, 116.

Velázquez, who later, upon becoming the bishop of Osma, assured her of the foundation of Soria:

“Estando yo en Palencia, me trajeron una carta del Obispo de Osma, llamado Doctor Velázquez a quien, siendo el canónigo y catedrático en la Iglesia mayor de Toledo, y andando yo todavía en algunos temores, procuré tratar porque sabía era muy gran letrado y siervo de Dios... yo le traté con toda llaneza mi alma, como tengo de costumbre. Hízome tan grandísimo provecho, que desde entonces comencé a andar sin tantos temores... porque me aseguraba con cosas de la Sagrada Escritura, que es lo que más a mí me hace al caso, cuando tengo la certidumbre de que lo sabe bien, que la tenía de él, junto con su buena vida” (F 30,1).

The Bible is widely and significantly present in the life and writings of St. Teresa of Jesus. A great inspiration, deep necessity was to discern her spirit with the Word of God. She has an unwavering conviction that the scripture is certainly the Truth of God, ‘source and origin of all truth, fulfillment and fullness at the same time’²². For this she would certainly proclaim: “Por cualquiera Verdad de la Sagrada Escritura, me pondría a morir mil muertes” (Vida, 33, 6). Therefore, with a strong force she would certainly assert that the Christian way of living is an adjustment and an alignment of one’s life in conformity with the Scripture.

1.2.2. Study of the Bible in the 16th century

This is a topic that has been scientifically well researched and some of the conclusions reached could be as follows: that the ordinary Christian of the sixteenth century, almost all nuns and the laity, and of course frequently, some of the clergy, often knew little or nothing about the sacred Scripture. For liturgical uses, there were translations of the Pauline letters as well as the Gospels; since the second decade of this century, albeit scarce and given that not everyone could afford them for being poor or illiterate.

They were reserved as a privilege for the rich, who if they happened to be illiterate, would cite biblical texts in other books like the *Flos Sanctorum* or *Vita Christi* authored by Carthusian Ludulfo of Saxony²³. In other circumstances they would know them through hearsay

²² MAXIMILIANO HERRÁIZ, *La palabra de Dios en la vida Teresiana*, o.c, 52.

²³ DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c, 34.

or through the frequent and cumbersome sermons of the day, consequently absorbing the richness of what the preacher would to address.

As such, Teresa would have been familiar with such biblical figures and characters through previous readings and through sermons, which were replete with Biblical imagery²⁴. In addition, Teresa's contemporaries and predecessors among whom were; Francisco de Osuna, Bernardo de Laredo, and Pedro de Alcántara, Augustine of Hippo, Benedict of Nursia, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Jerome, as well as influences from the Franciscan and Jesuit schools of thought. All these provided models for expressing spiritual experience through imagery taken from the everyday, material world.

1.2.3. Saint Paul: Humility as the *kenosis*²⁵ of Christ

The person of Christ serves for Saint Teresa as a central figure²⁶; the virtue of humility that he develops is primarily centered in Christ. I will focus on St. Paul's second chapter of his letter to the Philippians, in which he exhorts them to humility through the imitation of Christ. As he begins the chapter, he exhorts: "do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than you. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:1- 4). The question that I pose here would be: why should the Philippians put others ahead of themselves and humble themselves? Because the Lord Jesus Christ *emptied himself* and was obedient unto death for our sanctification and salvation. The Christological hymn of St. Paul in his exhortation to the Philippians, says Benedict 16th that it "illuminates the

²⁴ "En el estado actual de los estudios teresianos, se puede afirmar que santa Teresa conocía suficientemente bien la Sagrada Escritura. Con la ayuda de las *Concordancias* hoy podemos controlar las citas que hizo en sus obras: 23 libros del A. Testamento y 18 del N. Testamento. Abundantes son las citas del *Génesis* y el *Éxodo*; los *Salmos* y el *Cantar de los Cantares* son, sin duda, los más utilizados; algo menos los grandes profetas y nada los profetas menores. Del Nuevo Testamento, Mateo, Lucas y Juan son sus preferidos. San Pablo, con las cartas a los Romanos, Corintios, Gálatas, y Filipenses, está suficientemente representado. Y algunos textos escatológicos de Malaquías y el *Apocalipsis* también están recordados en sus escritos. Conociendo estos datos, no deja de admirar el hecho de que una mujer de su tiempo, sin ninguna formación académica especial, con tantas prohibiciones y reservas, haya podido acceder a tantos y tan cualificados textos de la Sda. Escritura. Es un hecho que habría que valorarlo en su contexto histórico como mera referencia cuantitativa" (DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c., 34).

²⁵ Greek *kenosis*, in this context indicates the voluntary renunciation by Christ of his right to divine privilege in his humble acceptance of human status.

²⁶ "Muchas cosas de las que aquí escribo no son de mi cabeza, sino que me las decía este mi *Maestro celestial*" (Vida 39, 8).

paradoxical emptying of the divine Word, who lays aside his glory and assumes the human condition”²⁷.

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. Moreover, being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:5 -11).

St. Paul thus sets the example of Christ himself before the Philippians, noting firstly, Christ’s majesty, secondly, His humility and thirdly, His exaltation²⁸. The three-fold reality of the Incarnation; that is, the majesty, humility and exaltation of the Word made flesh is set out by St. Paul to clearly elucidate the depth of Christ’s humility. The focus of St. Paul here is on the Incarnation and redemptive Passion²⁹. It is a great mystery and paradox that the Incarnate Word, true God and true man, He who has been given all power and authority from the Father provides the paradigm for humility. As the first illustration of Christ’s humility, St. Paul observes: *Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped...* (Phil. 2:6).

Instead, Paul is properly interpreted here with reference to the divinity of Christ, in the sense that, “Christ did not *exploit* his equality with God to avoid suffering”³⁰. Given this interpretation, we see in Phil. 2:6 an affirmation of the divinity, the majesty of Christ now commingled virtually contained within, the notion that he *did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*. That is to say, Christ had the power as God to remain aloof from suffering, temptation and all other aspects of the human condition, yet He freely chose the path of humility, obedience and love of His Father. This gives us a moral example to imitate. Jesus has the

²⁷ POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Commentary on Philippians 2:6-11 “The Paradoxical Emptying of the Divine Word”*, General audience delivered in Rome, (Zenit.org, June 1, 2005), n. 1.

²⁸ “He mentions Christ’s majesty first, in order that His humility might be more easily recommended” (POPE BENEDICT XVI, o.c., n. 1).

²⁹ *Ib.*

³⁰ MICHAEL DAUPHINAIS, *Christology*, Holy Apostles College & Seminary; [Web Mentor Online]. <http://home.comcast.net/~icuwweb/c02200.htm>, 3.

humility of all creatures: and as the true Christian humility is a grace, other creatures do not possess, but as participating excess humility of Jesus. God deemed to mysteriously enshroud His divinity so that He might suffer with His chosen people and save them from sin and death.

We might first note what he did not mean, namely, the ‘*kenotic*’ interpretation: that Jesus literally emptied himself of His divinity. Christ emptied Himself not by renouncing His divine nature, but by assuming a human nature. By adding, *taking the form of a servant...in the likeness of men*, St. Paul clearly refers to the human nature assumed by the Word.

This unfathomable act of humility is efficacious and meritorious, if the human person cooperates with grace by patterning their life after Christ’s, that is, if we imitate Christ. Thus, Paul’s focus is to exhort the Philippians to follow Christ’s example of selflessness by putting *the interests of others* first, in imitation of Christ’s humility, obedience and love³¹. The saint provides two subtle nuances, which help prove the authenticity of humility and obedience, when he says to observe humility and obedience, *not only as in my presence* and to *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*. The faithful and genuinely loving servant does what is right for its own sake, whether or not the master is watching.

Thus, the humility of a Christian consists in self-emptying. This emptying is not only in accord with the example of Christ who emptied himself but it is also a participation of Christ’s internal state of humility perduring even in the *glorified Christ*. Since this participation in the state of humility is a participation in the life of the glorious Christ, then humility unites us with the glorious Christ. Therefore, the more a person humbles himself or herself, the more she/he unites themselves with Christ and His glory³². This is the exhortation of the Apostle to the Philippians. This is the dignity and self-esteem that belongs to humility as well as the self-knowledge of our nothingness and vileness³³. As the Word unites human and divine natures in one Person (*hypostasis*)³⁴, He reunites man with God. Christ must be both man and God to truly accomplish our sanctification and salvation.

³¹ “El misterio divino de la kénosis aparece siempre en el Nuevo Testamento como principio de exhortación parenética para alentar la vida de los creyentes. El hombre que conoce desde la proclamación del evangelio la vida de Jesús habrá de acercarse a Dios desde el abajamiento de su condición: pobreza, marginación, desamparo” (FRANCISCO BRANDLE, *Los humildes, preferidos de Dios*, Revista de Espiritualidad 50 (1991) 167).

³² ANTONIO MASSIMINI, *A study of the antinomy of humility and self-esteem according to the writings of Nicolaus Lancicius, S.J.*, Officium Libri Catholici, Roma 1963, 35.

³³ *Ib.*

³⁴ “The first ecumenical council of Nicaea in 325 confessed... the Son of God... is of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the Father” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 1994, 465 - 466).

1.2.4. The Blessed Virgin Mary; the humble servant of the Lord

If we stick to her own confession, we will discover that Teresa discovered the face of Mary quite early and the need to communicate devotionally with her by a prayer. We know her first prayers to Mary, taught to her by her own mother, Doña Beatriz de Ahumada, not forgetting the role played by her father Don Alonso, and her maternal grandmother, Doña Teresa de las Cuevas played in her prayer life as a little girl in Ávila. We also encounter the first image of Mary, which Teresa saw in the churches of Ávila or Gotarrendura where she spent her childhood. Daniel de Pablo Maroto says:

“En Castilla, en las casas, en las ermitas, santuarios e iglesias abundaban las imágenes pintadas o esculpidas de María acompañadas de las devociones ‘populares’. Su hogar paterno era, como otros tantos en Ávila, un foco de piedad y devoción. Sin ese *humus* religioso no se pueden entender las ‘travesuras’ infantiles de Teresa de marchar a ‘tierra de moros’ para ser mártir y ganar barato el cielo...”³⁵.

When her mother died, little Teresa remained without mother, without a guide and teacher when she needed one. It is at this point when she invents the strategy of asking the Mother of Christ for help and strength, metamorphosing the maternal image for another ideal mother, the mother of heaven: “Afligida fuime a una imagen de nuestra Señora y *supliquéla fuese mi madre*” (Vida 1, 7). The result of all this demonstrates clearly that Teresa learned a lot from Mary. Among the things she learned from her is the humility, an aspect typical of Mary as she presents it in the *magnificat*. Saint Teresa says about the humility of the Virgin Mary that it is inseparable from love:

“La humildad... le trajo del cielo en las entrañas de la Virgen, y con ella le traemos nosotros de un cabello a nuestras almas...; quien más tuviere, más le tendrá y quien menos, menos; porque no puedo yo entender cómo haya ni puede haber humildad, sin amor, ni amor sin humildad” (CV 24, 2).

Daniel de Pablo Maroto sums it up as follows:

³⁵ DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c., 50.

“Entre las virtudes que le llaman la atención en María, y que *aprende* y practica Teresa, destaco la *humildad*. En su proyecto de camino espiritual, es el fundamento de la vida cristiana y de la vida comunitaria, y exige a veces soportar las injurias injustamente recibidas³⁶”.

I have attempted to put these two texts as the inlet for the reflection on the humility in the Virgin Mary. They reflect a peculiarity of the disposition and the spiritual situation of Mary, which is what we intent to explore here. Teresa sees in the Virgin Mary an example of “sublime humility”³⁷; which is a virtue; that this is one of the fundamental virtues of religious life. That Mary inspired her to practice it: “Créanme a mí, que lo he experimentado... ¡Qué disparate he dicho, que me crean a mí diciéndolo la verdadera Sabiduría, que es la misma Verdad, y *la Reina de los ángeles*” (CE 19, 3). She established this virtue as the foundation of life in her reformed monasteries. Nevertheless, more than just a virtue in particular, it could be interpreted as a decisive conviction of Mary’s lifestyle, her relationship with God. “Ese matiz es: que se trata de una *experiencia espiritual* inefable de María, de una *vivencia interior*, fruto de una viva fe”³⁸. Mary stands out as the origin of the *new People of God*. Her faith underscores what we would call the beginning of a new covenant with God with humility and that she is united with all those who work in continuation of this *new People of God*³⁹.

The *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) is the expression of a self-experience or the extraordinary experience which Mary lived in an exceptional time. L. Deiss has captured the depth of this experience, the scope of her spiritual prayer:

“Conocer el corazón de María, penetrar el sentido más profundo de su pensamiento, comprender la meditación de ese corazón pobre aunque de estirpe real: ¿quién de nosotros no ha deseado alguna vez conocer la oración de la Madre de Jesús? Pues bien, el

³⁶ DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c., (note 42), 52.

³⁷ ENRIQUE LLAMAS, *María, la humilde esclava del Señor*: Revista de Espiritualidad 50 (1991) 186.

³⁸ *Ib.*, 187.

³⁹ “Ya en los albores de la Iglesia, al comienzo del largo camino por medio de la fe que comenzaba con Pentecostés en Jerusalén, María estaba con todos los que constituían el germen del “nuevo Israel”. Estaba presente en medio de ellos como un testigo excepcional del misterio de Cristo. Y la Iglesia perseveraba constante en la oración junto a ella y, al mismo tiempo, “la contemplaba a la luz del Verbo hecho hombre. Así sería siempre” (JUAN PABLO II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 27).

Magnificat nos ilustra maravillosamente en este sentido. El corazón de María es en primer lugar un corazón que canta las alabanzas de Dios...”⁴⁰.

It is not my intention to enumerate the fundamental aspects of the *Magnificat*, rather the objective here is to reduce in analysis only one phrase, that is: “... de lo que significa *porque ha mirado la humillación de su esclava...*”⁴¹. This virtue is, moreover, one of the characteristic features of her soul that transpires throughout her life. Surely, from the very first moment of her conception, Mary received such light that in consequence therefore, eradicates the slightest inclination towards pride. At the time of the Annunciation, she lived a total forgetfulness of self, as is attested by her reaction to the angel’s greeting⁴², that she had a unique inner experience, enlightened, from her intimate spiritual communication with God⁴³. These words uttered by Mary in the *Magnificat* help to grasp the depth and the nuances of its contents in which she pronounces them.

The exemplary value of humility here is exalted. The tone is that of down-to-earth happiness at being chosen by God, heightened by wonder that the usual order of things is reversed, for Mary sees her election as a further evidence of God’s exalting the oppressed and putting down their oppressors.

In short, Mary expresses her self-confession of an inner conviction; recognition of her social situation assumed spiritually from which she enters into an intimate relationship with the Lord. Therefore, her proclamation of the greatness of the Lord is not just because He saved her from her marginalized situation of her society, but rather because He filled her with grace and

⁴⁰ LUCIEN DEISS, *Maria, Hija de Sión*, Editorial Cristiandad, Madrid, 1964, 191- 192.

⁴¹ ENRIQUE LLAMAS, *María, la humilde esclava del Señor*, o.c, 183-208.

⁴² “¿Cómo poner en duda que su humildad iba creciendo a medida que contemplaba los anonadamientos del Verbo y palpando en la vida cotidiana la dependencia absoluta de ella en que quiso vivir? Esta virtud se manifiesta especialmente en el silencio que se impone sobre el gran misterio de la Encarnación tanto en sus relaciones con San José como tratando’ los pastores y Magos o en presencia de Simeón, que la hablaba con tanto detenimiento de su Hijo” (DOM GODOFREDO BELLORGEY, *La humildad según San Benito: un programa de perfección para las almas*, El Perpetuo Socorro, Madrid 1962, 272).

⁴³ “... la Virgen María en el momento de la Anunciación, al ser hecha Madre de Dios, tuvo una vivencia interior singular, lúcida, fruto de su íntima comunicación espiritual con Dios; vivencia de una joven judía, de intensa vida de piedad, que había puesto toda su confianza y su voluntad en las manos de Dios, al ver realizado en Ella la plenitud de la salvación, y cumplida la más alta aspiración que podía alimentar en su corazón una mujer del Pueblo de Dios, que esperaba su salvación” (ENRIQUE LLAMAS, *María, la humilde esclava del Señor*, o.c,183-208) .

feels loved by Him⁴⁴. Hence, humility as a condition and inner disposition is synonymous to poverty of spirit, which is consequently translated “into a total dependence of God”⁴⁵.

It is recognition of the insufficiency of oneself, of one’s indignity and insignificance before the Lord, since it involves a complete and absolute openness to the Father. It is a confirmation of the Beatitudes and the stance of the ‘*anawim*’⁴⁶ of Yahweh. This is the only way in which the humble person ought to act. Recognition of oneself alone is not enough; rather it ought to embody the willingness and disposition to accept foremost the gift of the will of God as well, which is manifested to us. Mary maintained this disposition, “*María se humilla no sólo en todas las cosas, sino más que todos los demás*”⁴⁷, as evidenced by the mystery of the Annunciation, *may it be done to me according to thy word*.

The experience of humility resulted in her an attitude of total surrender to God without reservation. Mary recognizes herself as one among the poor ones of the Lord. In the simplicity of her soul, she did not put the slightest resistance to God, her Savior, when he asked for consent to elevate the dignity of the Mother of his Son⁴⁸; on the contrary, she put herself unconditionally in his hands. Mary feels that her poverty is converted into richness, that her humility is transformed into exaltation; precisely because her disposition is that of an openness to the will of God, who in return filled her with unreserved love, and has done great things in her, the greatest of all being conferred with the privilege of being the Mother of His Son, Jesus.

1.3. Authors (Church Fathers)

Having explored some of the biblical influences in St. Teresa, namely beginning from the role and environment of the study of the bible in the sixteenth century as well Christ’s exemplary humility as *kénosis* in Jesus Christ as is presented by St. Paul, and finally humility in the *Magnificat* in the person of the Virgin Mary, we will now focus our attention on the very influences which Teresa drew from some of the Church Fathers. We will present them chronologically.

⁴⁴ ENRIQUE LLAMAS, *María, la humilde esclava del Señor*, o.c., 187.

⁴⁵ F. M. LÓPEZ MELOS, *María de Nazaret, la Virgen del Magnificat*, PPC, Madrid, 1989, 14.

⁴⁶ In Mary’s *Magnificat*, which incorporates OT themes, a woman who has profoundly assimilated the spirit of the *anawim* gives praise to god for the regard God shows for the Humility (*tapeinosis*, meaning “abasement” or “lowliness”) of God’s servant. (Cf. WILLIAM H. SHANNON, o.c., 517).

⁴⁷ D. G. BELLORGE, *La humildad según San Benito: Un programa de perfección para las almas*, El Perpetuo Socorro, Madrid 1962, 272.

⁴⁸ LG, 56.

1.3.1. Augustine of Hippo

It is unquestionable if we accept the documented information, and as Teresa herself attests, that she read the book of St. Augustine, *the Confessions*⁴⁹. Teresa's encounter with St. Augustine was casual, but decisive. The first contact with the Augustinian spirituality was in the monastery of Augustinian nuns of Ávila, *Santa Maria de Gracia*⁵⁰, where she was educated, sent there by her father in her late adolescence. There are few reliable reports that have come from that cloister on the period of time she spent there, but most probably one year and a half⁵¹. In this monastery, she begun to balance her overflowing affectivity and matured in her religious vocation.

The story about the 'conversion' of Augustine, which St. Teresa read, was a translation from the Portuguese Augustinian Sebastian Toscano, published in 1554 in Salamanca's Andrés de Portonaris. It is therefore an edition that Teresa would have read easily and closely related to the events that she narrates. Augustine writes:

“No te quieras acordar de nuestras maldades antiguas. Porque yo me sentía estar preso de ellas y echaba voces miserables. ¿Hasta cuándo? ¿Hasta cuándo? Mañana, mañana. ¿Por qué no agora, por qué no se acabará en esta hora el fin de mi torpedad? Decía yo tales cosas, y lloraba con amarga contrición de mi corazón. Y en esto oía una voz de la casa que estaba allí cerca con un cantar que decía, y lo repetía muchas veces, como si fuera un niño o niña, no lo sé: “Toma, lee, toma, lee”. Y yo, súbito mudado el rostro... y reprimiendo el ímpetu de las lágrimas, levantábame no entendiendo serme otra cosa mandado divinalmente, sino que abriese el libro y que leyese el primero capítulo que se me ofreciese... De manera que apresurado volví a aquel lugar adonde estaba Alipio, porque allí había dejado el libro del Apóstol (Pablo). Arrebátelo, leí en silencio el primer capítulo que a mis ojos se ofreció, el cual decía: “No en comeres y beberes, no en camas y

⁴⁹ “En este tiempo me dieron las *Confesiones* de San Agustín, que parece el Señor lo ordenó, porque yo no las procuré ni nunca las había visto. Yo soy muy aficionada a San Agustín, porque el monasterio adonde estuve seglar era de su Orden y también por haber sido pecador, que en los santos que después de serlo el Señor tornó a Sí hallaba yo mucho consuelo, pareciéndome en ellos había de hallar ayuda... Como comencé a leer las Confesiones, paréceme me vía yo allí. Comencé a encomendarme mucho a este glorioso Santo. Cuando llegué a su conversión y leí cómo oyó aquella voz en el huerto, no me parece sino que el Señor me la dio a mí, según sintió mi corazón. Estuve por gran rato que toda me deshacía en lágrimas y entre mí misma con gran aflicción y fatiga” (V 9, 7-8).

Almost all the studies about conversion of Teresa include a relation with the conversion of Saint Augustine.

⁵⁰ “Porque no me parece había tres meses que andaba en estas vanidades, cuando me llevaron a un monasterio que había en este lugar, adonde se criaban personas semejantes, aunque no tan ruines en costumbres como yo; y esto con tan gran disimulación, que sola yo y algún deudo lo supo; porque aguardaron a coyuntura que no pareciese novedad: porque, haberse mi hermana casado y quedar sola sin madre, no era bien” (V 2, 6).

⁵¹ “Estuve año y medio en este monasterio harto mejorada” (V 3, 2).

deshonestidades, no en porfías y contiendas; mas vestíos de nuestro Señor Jesucristo, y no tengáis cuidado de vuestro cuerpo”⁵².

Having therefore been exposed to the writings of Augustine, Teresa would have been absorbed in his writing on the virtue of humility among others.

a) Interiorization and self-knowledge

Without any doubt, we can affirm that Augustine is not only the ‘doctor of grace’ but also the ‘interiority doctor’. His particular style and the biography, like a new literary device it permits him to self-analysis and to know himself while narrating his life and at the same time to transcend himself. Here prayer appears as a method of self-knowledge, which is practiced while being written at the same time⁵³. His writings, particularly those in which highlight his own experience, reveal the journey that he himself has traveled towards his interior to meet God and himself, and in the same narrative it becomes a motivation for readers to enter their own interior to taste the mystery of their own interiority, because that is where everyone will find the meaning and the dynamism of life. This return to the interior itself is what researchers call Augustine’s ‘interiority principle’ which is not reducible solely to the field of spirituality but “es un principio que ilumina toda la filosofía y teología agustinianas... y aparece como una categoría básica, presente en todo el pensamiento agustiniano”⁵⁴. It is noteworthy that, although Augustine develops this principle of interiority in all his philosophical and theological reflection, the first contact he has with the world of interiority experience is in his relationship with neo-Platonic philosophy⁵⁵.

But for the Bishop of Hippo, self-knowledge itself is also the way of humility. “Vino el Hijo de Dios en figura de hombre y se hizo humilde. Se te manda que seas humilde. No que de hombre te hagas bestia; Él, siendo Dios, se hizo hombre; tú, siendo hombre, reconoce que eres hombre; toda tu humildad consiste en conocerte a ti mismo”⁵⁶. Augustine believes that the lack

⁵² SAN AGUSTÍN, *Confesiones*, libro 8, cap. 12, Nueva edición, FUE, Madrid 1996, 212-213.

⁵³ L, FREEMAN, *Jesús, el Maestro interior, meditación cristiana*, Bonum, Buenos Aires 2007², 57.

⁵⁴ M. DIEGO SÁNCHEZ, *Historia de la Espiritualidad*, Editorial de la Espiritualidad, Madrid 1992, 253

⁵⁵ “Amonestado de aquí (los neoplatónicos) a volver a mí mismo, entré en mi interior guiado por ti; y púdolo hacer porque tú te hiciste mi ayuda. Entré y vi con el ojo del alma, como quiera que él fuese, sobre el mismo ojo de mi alma, sobre mi mente, una luz inconmutable, no ésta vulgar y visible a toda carne...” (SAN AGUSTÍN, *Confesiones*. o.c, 219).

⁵⁶ SAN AGUSTÍN, *In Io Ev.* tr 25, 16, 649.

of self-knowledge leads man to repeat the sin of origins. The voice of the serpent continues whispering in the ears of men, 'you shall be like gods'. It is pride that invades the heart⁵⁷.

Thus for Augustine, the path of internalization that the believer ought to make to the encounter with God, almost necessarily leads him to self-knowledge and knowledge of God. Both levels of knowledge help and enlighten each other. Self-knowledge reveals to man the reality of sin and their need for redemption. Knowledge of God enlightens man's life revealing the dignity and greatness received as a free gift of God. Also by its very nature, self-knowledge, when it reveals to people their truth, becomes the way of humility.

b) On humility

He consistently presents his notion of humility as a central notion for understanding Christ and the Christian way of life, insisting strongly upon humility's centrality for Christian discipleship. The theological basis for Augustine's doctrine of humility is in his Christology as he derives his understanding of humility from the Gospel narratives of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ⁵⁸.

Augustine upholds Christ as the archetype of Christian humility so that a truly compelling, transforming, and comprehensive account of this virtue must derive from an understanding of Christ who grounds and animates true humility. In Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, divine love is revealed "in the form of a servant" (Phil 2:7). The self-emptying (*kenosis*) of the Word and the divine descent into human history is the paradigmatic form and source of humility in Christian discipleship. Based on this then, Christian humility is thus more than a virtue that God urges upon humanity. It is the very way God's Word comes to humanity and invites it to pattern our lives. Humility teaches us to see others as equals. "Humility induces us not to presume on our own strength and to trust in God"⁵⁹.

The way of humility, then, is primarily God's way. Only by extension is it our way, insofar as we imitate the Lord through Christian discipleship. According to Augustine, one way to understand Christ's humility is to see it in opposition to pride, the root of human sin expressed in the desire to substitute the self for God and dominate over others. Augustine's use of the word

⁵⁷ V. CAPANAGA, *Agustín de Hipona, Maestro de la conversión cristiana*, BAC, Madrid 1974, 139.

⁵⁸ D. J. MACQUEEN, *Contemptus Dei: St. Augustine on the Disorder of Pride in Society, and Its Remedies*: *Recherches Augustiniennes* 9 (1973), 237-59, 280.

⁵⁹ M. PELLIGRINO, *Spiritual Journey. Augustine's Reflection on the Christian Life*, 1996, 57-58.

superbia, often translated as ‘pride’, means something more serious than what is generally conveyed by ‘pride’ in the modern context where pride is regarded as boastfulness or at best, self-assuredness and confidence.

He derives his understanding of pride principally from the biblical doctrine of creation, and deeply influenced by the text of *Ecclesiasticus* (Sirach 10: 13): “The beginning of all sin is pride; and the beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God” (*Ecclesiasticus* 10: 13). It has been written, it is sure, it is true⁶⁰. For Augustine, the vice of pride always entails, at its root, an offense or revolt against God. It does not have a strictly anthropocentric sphere of reference as it tends to in contemporary sphere.

The dichotomy between pride and humility is not principally in ethical terms but in ontological ones, as pride offends the very structure of reality and humility abides by it. Pride and humility represent two fundamentally different responses to the ‘givenness’ of created reality. He believes that there is truth and purpose in created reality, but it is not a purpose that we create ourselves; rather it is God alone who gives purpose, meaning, and direction to the world. Humility, then, involves a submission: neither a submission to something of one’s own creation, nor to an arbitrary set of rules, but rather, a submission to reality⁶¹. This reality is designed with a definite orientation to goodness, a goodness modeled upon the goodness of God the Creator. Humility according to him is thus a virtue of knowing the truth about ourselves: he links it intrinsically with the awareness or self-knowledge of one’s sinfulness. To know ourselves truly is to know ourselves as sinners in need of the mercy of God in Christ⁶²; hence, it is the mark of human wisdom.

1.3.2. Benedict⁶³ of Nursia

Benedict spoke of humility formally in chapter 7 of his Rule, imagining the spiritual life as a ladder, he taught that “to climb is to descend, but to descend in humility is to ascend to

⁶⁰ *Tractates on the Gospel on John*, 25.15.

⁶¹ *Ciudad de Dios*, 15.22, p. 636.

⁶² LISA FULLAN, o.c., 15.

⁶³ Benedict of Nursia, who lived from A.D. 480-547, led an expanding network of monastic orders, and wrote this document crystallizing practical insights from his years of managing these organizations. Benedict wrote this rule for monks which was both excellent for discretion and eloquent in style which he portrayed in his life, because he lived out the teaching of *The Rule*. The Rule was written at about A.D. 527 and was intended to be the governing document for the monasteries Benedict founded.

God”⁶⁴. His agenda regarding this virtue is a matter of practical rather than philosophical wisdom. The Rule of St. Benedict outlines twelve degrees of humility. While some of the degrees pertain specifically to monastic life, others are more general. For example, Benedict believes that to be humble means to believe and acknowledge oneself more vile than all; to think of oneself as worthless and unprofitable for all purposes, not to delight in fulfilling one’s own desires, and to fear God and to be always mindful of everything that God has commanded⁶⁵. Drawing from this then, one must acknowledge not simply that he is contemptible, but that he is worthless and worse than anyone else. “The picture of humility in Benedict’s *Rule* is best understood in light of the writings of the desert ascetics: Benedict took the virtue of humility from the desert and made it a defining virtue in monastic life: he took a virtue of human lowliness and made it a virtue of people in communities”⁶⁶. This self-abasement is based on reverence for God.

The founder of Western monasticism says that, ‘pride is the basic human defect and humility is its corrective’. He makes the cornerstone of his rule of life in a chapter on humility that was written for Roman men in a culture that valued *machismo*, power and independence. Benedict, in essence, created inter-human humility when he formed communities of monks whose growth in holiness was attained through, not despite, their human interactions⁶⁷.

The fifth chapter of his Rule prescribes a prompt, ungrudging, and an absolute obedience to the superior in all things lawful, ‘unhesitating obedience’ being called the first degree, or first step of humility⁶⁸. The motives for obedience include the desire for a deeper walk with God and desire to do what God commands because His commands are right and he delights in doing what is right. Further, in chapter seven of the rule, he identifies twelve degrees of humility, levels of growth, which lead to inner peace, achieving a state of mind that allows living that is truly human in relation with other human beings. Moreover, what is perhaps most important is that

⁶⁴ ELIZABETH A. DREYER, *Humility*, o.c, 349.

⁶⁵ SAN BENITO, *La regla de San Benito, ordenada por materias, y su vida, en el español corriente de hoy*, (Versión de ANTONIO LINAGE CONDE), Abadía de Silos, Silos 1994, 47.

⁶⁶ LISA FULLAN, o.c, 15.

⁶⁷ JOAN CHITTISTER, *Doce pasos hacia la libertad interior: retorno a la humildad*, Sal Terrae, Santander 2005, 21.

⁶⁸ “La humildad esta, sobre todo, en la obediencia sin demora. Esta es la que conviene a aquellos que nada estiman tanto como a Cristo. Ya sea en razón del santo servicio que han profesado, o por el temor del infierno, o por la gloria de la vida eterna, en cuanto el superior les manda algo, sin admitir dilación alguna, lo realizan como si Dios se lo mandara. El Señor dice de éstos: “En cuanto me oyó, me obedeció”. Y dice también a los que enseñan: “El que a ustedes oye, a mí me oye.” Estos tales, dejan al momento sus cosas, abandonan la propia voluntad, desocupan sus manos y dejan sin terminar lo que estaban haciendo, y obedeciendo a pie juntadas, ponen por obra la voz del que manda” (SAN BENITO, *La regla de San Benito*, o.c, 47).

these twelve degrees of humility lead to personal development and community awareness, permeating the person in his entire life⁶⁹. When one climbs all twelve steps three things will happen in the person.

In the first, he will find the perfect love of God. In this perfect love he will overcome fear and anxiety while finding that now the things that make humility will come naturally⁷⁰. This love is more than the expression of emotions; it is the experience between the people and God that by personally experiencing God's love, which was supremely expressed through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, Christians are to respond in deep gratitude with passionate love for God, and selfless, sacrificial love for others. God's love means that God eternally gives of himself for others and we imitate this communicable attribute of God first by loving God in return.

Secondly, by loving others in imitation of the way God loves them. This ladder of humility leads to humility as a natural part of the person, and to the perfect love of God⁷¹. This passionate love for God and others is a way of sacrifice and service. Humility is the path to the perfection of God's love, by means of service.

Thirdly, on completion of the twelve steps of humility one finds pleasure from the practice of virtue. These issues of humility are no longer a list of arduous tasks but instead virtues that when practiced give pleasure to the heart. This underscores the work of the Holy Spirit in revealing or working this reality into the person; a passive role in sanctification and an active one in which the person plays a part by means of obedience.

The path toward humility begins with obedience and becomes pleasure out of the love of God in living virtuously. This virtuous living affects the leader as leading out of new motives, as a servant. Up to this point, the person is called the man or the monk but here in the final picture he is called His servant⁷². Thus, humility basically calls one to look beyond themselves, it is a human virtue simply. That is, humility is a perfection of a human capacity, regardless of the

⁶⁹ JOAN CHITTISTER, o.c, 22.

⁷⁰ SAN BENITO, *La regla de San Benito*, o.c, 52.

⁷¹ "Ahora bien, la escala misma así levantada es nuestra vida en el mundo, a la que el Señor levanta hasta el cielo cuando el corazón se humilla. Decimos, en efecto, que los dos lados de esta escala son nuestro cuerpo y nuestra alma, y en esos dos lados la vocación divina ha puesto los diversos escalones de humildad y de disciplina por los que debemos subir" (JOAN CHITTISTER, o.c, 22).

⁷² "La humildad benedictina comienza con el simple reconocimiento de la presencia y el poder de Dios en mi simple pero diferenciada vida. En primer lugar, la enseñanza de Benito sobre la humildad implica que la presencia de Dios exige una respuesta total" (Ib., 22).

existence or perception by the agent of a God before whom all human excellence is appropriately humble.

When the monk has internalized these degrees of humility, he will soon reach God's love that 'for being perfect or perfection excludes all fear', whereby what was previously observed without fear, they would henceforth be accomplished naturally; not for fear of hell but for the love of Christ, for the same good habit and attractiveness of virtues⁷³. All of which the Lord will deign to manifest by the Holy Spirit in the person, when they are clean of vices and sins.

1.3.3. Bernard of Clairvaux

Teresa draws a lot of inspiration from St. Bernard of Clairvaux on the theme of humility; referring to him she says that "se deleitaba en la humildad" (V 22). The virtue of humility is the genesis of perfection. Bernard, as well as Agustin, places it on the basis of spiritual edifice. It is the foundation without which nothing is solid in the Christian life⁷⁴. It is certain that their approaches on this theme have close, if not same appearance. "Este amor a la sacratísima humanidad de Cristo que hace tan semejantes y parecidos el espíritu de San Bernardo y el de Santa Teresa, es quizá el origen y la causa del gran parecido y semejanza grande que entre la doctrina de ambos se nota"⁷⁵. Below we will analyse the two faces of humility.

a) Interiorization and self-knowledge

Without any doubt Bernard of Clairvaux is another great representative and promoter of self-knowledge. For him, self-knowledge begins when man discovers how hard it is to be human: "Cuando alguien descubre por primera vez, que está en dificultades, esa persona clamará al Señor quien lo escuchará y responderá: 'Yo te liberaré y tú me glorificarás'. De esta manera su autoconocimiento será un paso en dirección al conocimiento de Dios; Dios se hará visible para ti, de acuerdo a la imagen de Dios que se haya restaurado en tu interior"⁷⁶.

For Bernard, besides the sciences taught by the intellect there exist another science through self-knowledge that leads man to one of the most fundamental attitudes of Christian life:

⁷³ SAN BENITO, *La regla de San Benito*, o.c., 57.

⁷⁴ CARLOS PRIETO GARCÍA, *Santa Teresa y el vocabulario espiritual, en romance, de sus maestros*, Fundación universitaria española universidad pontificia de Salamanca, Madrid 2014, 77.

⁷⁵ FUSTER, ELOÍNO NÁCAR, *San Bernardo y Santa Teresa: La basílica Teresiana* 5(1901) 234.

⁷⁶ BERNARDO DE CLARAVAL, *Obras Completas, Sermones sobre el Cantar de los Cantares*, vol. V (Edición preparada por los monjes cistercienses de España), BAC, Madrid 1987, 36, 6.

humility. The wisdom of the intellect ‘enlarges’ man’s horizon, but does not always direct him toward his ultimate end which is his salvation. In this way, for the Bernard, knowledge has value as long as it orients towards the search for self-knowledge, for man needs to enter into himself, in order to know himself⁷⁷. The reason for this importance is that self-knowledge is the first step in order to penetrate the knowledge of God. Man cannot rise on the mystical way if he has not been able to access his own reality. Thus, knowledge of self and appears somehow parallel to the knowledge of God and, therefore, both are inseparable⁷⁸. For him, it would be unacceptable for man not to know himself because in his nature there is the need for self-realization that enables him to make the leap to the knowledge of God⁷⁹. Self-knowledge does not necessarily follow the purely intellectual way; rather it is the result of personal experience, which leads man to recognize his own littleness. This is the principle of humility, which is the path of the truth. That is why self-knowledge is a feature of the moral life that prevents man from neither overestimating himself nor underestimating himself⁸⁰.

b) On humility and truth

Bernard accepted the Augustinian notion that humility is a virtue of self-knowledge, in particular, of man’s fallen status and of his nothingness without God. Likewise, Bernard in *The Steps of Humility* echoed the widely shared idea that humility and pride are bound together in an epic life-and-death conflict, the former leading one on an upward ascent to truth, the latter toward personal destruction. Yet Bernard’s writings on humility also reveal a religious thinker who is deeply concerned with practical questions pertaining to the motivations for humility. In this regard, he begins by indicating what one will gain through the cultivation of humility, given the fact that it is a quality that is ‘bitter but medicinal’. Bernard describes this process of self-fashioning as three degrees in the perception of truth that are only made possible through humility⁸¹.

⁷⁷ “Esta consideración de ti mismo abarca tres preguntas: si consideras qué eres, quién eres, cómo eres”. BERNARDO DE CLARAVAL, *Obras Completas, Tratado sobre la Consideración*, vol. II (Edición preparada por los monjes cistercienses de España), BAC, Madrid 1994², II, 7.

⁷⁸ “De esta manera, el conocimiento propio es un paso hacia el conocimiento de Dios. Por la imagen que se reproduce en ti, se descubre él mismo” (BERNARDO DE CLARAVAL, *Obras Completas, El Cantar de los Cantares*, o.c., 36, 6.

⁷⁹ “Ya sabéis que hoy nos hemos propuesto hablar de las dos clases de ignorancia: la de nosotros mismos y la de Dios. Ya advertíamos que debemos preservarnos de las dos, porque ambas son condenables”, (Ib., 36, 1).

⁸⁰ RAFAEL RAMÓN GUERRERO, *Historia de la Filosofía Medieval*, Akal, Madrid 2002, 167.

⁸¹ BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, “*The Steps of Humility*,” 34.

In humility there are steps in which we get to know the *truth*. It begins firstly, within ourselves, then in our own neighbors and finally in oneself. The first level instills in us the reason in which we get to judge ourselves with humility, seeing the truth about us, arriving at the realization that ‘we are nothing, we are weak’⁸². The second level opens our wills to accept to put up with the others, our neighbors with love, accommodating them with their ‘weaknesses and miseries’⁸³. It pertains to our capacities for knowledge of others through compassion, generosity, and mercy. What is significant about this is that Bernard sees humility as a quality whose cultivation and practice is essential for relationships between people within the world, not one that pertains exclusively to what is either beyond the world or located entirely within the soul of the ascetic or within the walls of the monastery⁸⁴.

Thus, Bernard treats humility as a precondition for fraternity or neighborliness with others. By first seeking the truth about ourselves, we are made ready for sympathetic and charitable relations with others: “one cannot be merciful if he is not humble... Considering how easily you are tempted and how prone to sin, you will become meek and ready to help others in the ‘spirit of gentleness’”⁸⁵. The ultimate reward, or final step, of humility is the knowledge of truth in itself revealed through the humble contemplation of God. It is the purity of the heart, gives us the capacity and elevates us to contemplation to ‘heavenly and divine things’⁸⁶. Nevertheless, the first step or degree of truth made possible by humility is truth in our selves, or self-knowledge.

In these three levels, humility is a way in which the Triune God drives us along the way to human perfection. The Son guides us, by uniting himself to our reason in humility; while the Holy Spirit, who by uniting himself to our will, pours in our hearts His love; the Father, who, uniting Himself to our souls, with His outstretched hand, pulls us to the heavenly and divine things. Humility perfects the other virtues; it elevates the soul to the heights of mystical

⁸² FUSTER, ELOÍNO NÁCAR, *San Bernardo y Santa Teresa*, o.c., 236.

⁸³ *Ib.*, 236.

⁸⁴ While Bernard’s treatment of humility claims to follow in the steps of *The Rule of St. Benedict* (just as the Cistercian movement itself was an attempt to restore the purity of *The Rule*), the social-relational dimensions of humility are given greater emphasis in Bernard. It is also worth pointing out that Bernard self-consciously inverts Benedict by focusing on the stages of pride rather than the steps toward humility. Benedict acknowledges this in his concluding note: It looks as if I had described the steps of pride rather than humility. All I can say is that I can only teach what I know myself. I could not very well describe the way up because I am more used to falling down than to climbing. (BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, “*The Steps of Humility*,” 82).

⁸⁵ BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, “*The Steps of Humility*,” 42.

⁸⁶ FUSTER, ELOÍNO NÁCAR, *San Bernardo y Santa Teresa: La basílica Teresiana* 5(1901) 234-238.

contemplation. God admits the humble into His intimacy and treats them with a special tenderness. Bernard seems to attribute to humility the wonders of mystical union; an essential complement to this virtue is love. Both virtues lead the soul into contemplation. Bernard presents both virtues, that is, love and humility with the same enthusiasm⁸⁷.

Yet Bernard's writings on humility also reveal a religious thinker who is deeply concerned with practical questions pertaining to the motivations for humility. In this regard, he begins by indicating what one will gain through the cultivation of humility, given that it is a quality that is "bitter but medicinal." Bernard describes this process of self-fashioning as three degrees in the perception of truth that are only made possible through humility⁸⁸. The ultimate reward, or final step, of humility is the knowledge of truth in itself revealed through the humble contemplation of God. Nevertheless, the first step or degree of truth made possible by humility is truth in our selves, or self-knowledge. The second truth, after knowledge of self (and sin), pertains to our capacities for knowledge of others through compassion, generosity, and mercy. What is significant about this is that Bernard sees humility as a quality whose cultivation and practice is essential for relationships *between* people within the world, not one that pertains exclusively to what is either beyond/outside the world or located entirely within the soul of the ascetic or within the walls of the monastery⁸⁹. Thus, Bernard treats humility as a precondition for fraternity or neighborliness with others. By first seeking the truth about ourselves, we are made ready for sympathetic and charitable relations with others: "one cannot be merciful if he is not humble... Considering how easily you are tempted and how prone to sin, you will become meek and ready to help others in the 'spirit of gentleness'"⁹⁰. What Bernard helps to highlight is that humility's value is not restricted to hard-earned self-knowledge in the service of disciplining the will, for it is a virtue that also relates to our ability to seek understanding with and hold sympathetic regard for others. Bernard (as I read him) is highlighting a relational network between self and other that humility helps both to open up and to shape, slowing drives toward condemnation and rejection ("mocks" and "sneers"), and fostering conditions for critical attentiveness, mutual understanding, and generosity. In principle, there is no reason to suppose

⁸⁷ CARLOS PRIETO GARCÍA, o.c., 77.

⁸⁸ BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, "The Steps of Humility, 34.

⁸⁹ BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, *The Steps of Humility*, 82.

⁹⁰ *Ib.*, 42.

that this manner and mode of relating to others should be restricted to fellow members of the monastery in his time, nor to Christians or theists in ours.

1.3.4. Thomas Aquinas: Humility that leads to exaltation

Among the Dominicans, St. Thomas Aquinas stands out as a teacher of the catholic doctrine. Here I will enter directly into his teaching concerning the virtue of humility. Thomas' approach to humility is different: he presents a defensible and relatively thorough account of the virtue of humility in question 161 of Part II-II of the *Summa Theologiae*. He clarifies and expands the outlines that St. Benedict has presented and situates humility within the broader context of a virtuous Christian life. He defines humility as a virtue whose function is to temper and restrain the mind, lest it tend to high things immoderately⁹¹: “Es la virtud que refrena los deseos de la propia grandeza y nos hace conocer nuestra pequeñez ante Dios”⁹². “La humildad se preocupa preferentemente de la reverencia debida a Dios como súbditos”⁹³. For him humility is a virtue that includes knowledge of central truths about God, as well as appropriate approaches in light of those truths.

Therefore, an important element of humility is the recognition of one's own state of spiritual imperfection and powerlessness to do good on his/her own. The humble person's acknowledgement of his/her own defects stems from the recognition of God's perfection. One who contemplates the greatness of God cannot help but notice that he is 'contemptible' and 'vile' by comparison. The root of humility, then, is reverence for God: humility would seem to denote in the first place the person's subjection to God; and for this reason, Augustine ascribes humility, which he understands by poverty of spirit, to the gift of fear whereby person reveres God.

Humility is something of a sticking point in his order of the virtues: that is, what Christianity has regarded as one of Jesus' salient virtues, which Aristotle dismissed as a vice opposed to pride. Thomas constructed the virtue of humility as three themes in connection with an underlying commitment to truth and an underlying Christological motif. Humility's function is to moderate the human passion of hope, in line with Aristotelian anthropology. As Aquinas

⁹¹ *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 161. a. 1.

⁹² *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 161. a. 1-2.

⁹³ *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 161. a. 3.

explains, we must not only revere God in Himself, but also that which is His in each one⁹⁴. The humble person thus recognizes and praises God's work in others.

He supports his point by quoting Philemon: "In humility, let each regard the others as better than themselves" (Philemon 2, 3). At first glance, then, humility may not look very attractive. Thinking of oneself as incapable of doing anything may seem to imply despair. Any account of humility that implies despair will be unacceptable however, because despair is opposed to the theological virtue of hope. If humility is truly a virtue, then it must be compatible with the other qualities we know to be virtues. Fortunately, self-abasement is not the end of the story. As the earlier references to humility's root in reverence for God might suggest, the virtue requires not hopelessness but reliance on God's grace. So when Aquinas says that humility 'suppresses the movement of hope', he seems to use hope to mean self-confidence not the trust in God implied by the theological virtue of hope.

One might think that even if humility is not opposed to hope, it is opposed to the virtue of magnanimity or greatness of soul. It would seem that one who considered himself 'unprofitable for all purposes' and put himself in 'the lowest place' would refrain from aiming at great things. Again, however, humility must be compatible with the other virtues if it is itself a virtue. The humble man recognizes God's work in each person and acknowledges that work as far better than anything he could do on his own⁹⁵. He does not, of course, think that what others do on their own is far better than what God does in them.

The removal of the obstacle of pride clears the way for the introduction of virtue and grace into one's soul. Humility also leads to a greater love for one's neighbors because it causes one to esteem them above oneself rather than judge them harshly.⁹⁶ We have seen that the virtue of humility includes recognition of one's own defects, reverence for God, and esteem of one's neighbors. The humble man realizes that he can do nothing good on his own but depends entirely on God's help in all he does. As Thomas Aquinas has explained, humility restrains the movement of hope in oneself.

Like all moral virtues, humility is the mean between two extremes: an excess and a defect. In addition, as it is the case with most virtues, one extreme is both more common and

⁹⁴ *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 161. a. 3 ad 1.

⁹⁵ *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 161. a. 3 ad 1.

⁹⁶ THOMAS A KEMPIS, *Imitation of Christ*, (Translated by WILLIAM C. CREASY), Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame 1989, 32.

more opposed to the mean than the other. In this case, the excess (extreme self-confidence or simply 'pride') is much more common than the defect and is more opposed to humility. The defect (extreme lack of confidence in oneself) is so uncommon that it does not seem to have a particular name: I will call it "extreme self-abasement." As we have seen, however, even the most humble person recognizes his own dignity as someone who was made in the image of God and to whom God has given abilities and spiritual gifts. The rare person guilty of extreme self-abasement fails to recognize these qualities in himself. Pride (excessive confidence in oneself) is by far the more common vice opposed to humility and thus is considered its contrary or opposite, as noted above.

Finally, the typical axel of humility is self-abasement. What makes self-abasement a means to humility is the usual drive of the passion of hope, as Thomas understands well most people tends to unreasonable self-aggrandizement, so humility usually requires restraint of the appetite for excellence to bring the appetite into line with right reason. He "places humility as a potential part of the cardinal virtue of temperance, where its function is to moderate hope which is a passion of the irascible appetite. Humility can, however, hold its head up as an enabling virtue, by weeding out the pride which gets in the way of the acquisition of other virtues"⁹⁷. Humility constructed this way carries with it a double resonance for an ethics of virtue. First, humility may be understood to work in two different ways in moral knowing: as a general virtue of self-knowledge by comparison, but also as an epistemologically essential aspect of the acquisition of virtues in general.

In this discussion of humility in Thomas, the virtue of magnanimity has cropped up a number of times. Magnanimity is an important virtue for Aristotle while he understood humility to be a vice opposed to total virtue. From Christian tradition, on the other hand, Thomas understood humility to be a signal virtue, opposed to the (sometimes)-greatest sin of pride. According to him, "humility properly regards the subjection of man to God"⁹⁸ and that, "Humility is the road to exaltation"⁹⁹. Therefore, it predisposes man to practice all the virtues, which consist in submitting our intellect and will to God.

⁹⁷ LISA FULLAN, LISA FULLAN, *The virtue of Humility*, o.c., 56.

⁹⁸ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 162. a. 1c.

⁹⁹ JOHN MCCLERNON, *Sermon in a Sentence, Volume 5: Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2007, 36.

For St. Thomas, humility, like all moral virtues, is perfected and guided by the virtue of prudence, the first of the virtues when it comes to practical action. Prudence, he says, is the principal virtue in practical matters. Prudence [is] the complement of all the moral virtues... The knowledge of prudence pertains to all the virtues¹⁰⁰, that Prudence is the conductor of the virtues.

1.4. John of the Cross

Undoubtedly one of the greatest ‘spiritual masters’ of St. Teresa is St. John of the Cross, but at the same time, and for a curious symbiotic action, he is also a disciple of hers. Both are also from Avila, contemporaries in the peak in the world of mysticism¹⁰¹. Teresa’s first encounters with her confessors, her spiritual directors, counselors or collaborators in her reform of the Order is quite spectacular, especially how she discovered in them, depths of wisdom or holiness. She had a special ability to sense, and almost to guess the spiritual values and make use of them for her own spiritual needs or for reform of Carmel. One such example is John of the Cross. She first met him in Medina del Campo, during her second foundation of the Discalced Carmelite nuns. “Cuando se encontró con Fray Juan de Santo Matía, era ya escritora mística todavía sin fama. En ese primer encuentro le contagió la fiebre del proyecto”¹⁰².

Another significant encounter between the two was in Valladolid; there Teresa formed John of the Cross as a novice in the reformed Carmelites. During this time, she says: “Toda nuestra manera de proceder... así de mortificación como del estilo de hermandad y recreación que tenemos Juntas” (F 13, 5). In another sense, Teresa acted in the beginning as a ‘teacher’ to John, but in the same historical, literary contexts, she confesses: “él era tan bueno que, al menos yo, *podía mucho más aprender de él que él de mí*” (F 13, 5).

The most decisive encounter between them was in the monastery of the Incarnation¹⁰³ in Ávila, upon the request by Teresa to be the spiritual director for the nuns, as she was reforming it. It is without doubt supposed that Teresa learned a lot from John of the Cross, more that she

¹⁰⁰ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 166. a. 2 ad 1.

¹⁰¹ DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c, 138.

¹⁰² *Ib.*, 141.

¹⁰³ “El encuentro más duradero y fecundo lo tuvo en Ávila. Nombrada la Santa priora de *La Encarnación* (1571-1574), hizo venir a Juan de la Cruz como confesor de la comunidad. Fueron los años decisivos de ‘encuentros’ entre los dos grandes místicos. Bajo la guía del ‘maestro’ Juan de la Cruz, la Santa llegó a la plenitud de la unión mística en el matrimonio espiritual (CC 25). Durante más de cinco años, Juan de la Cruz ejerció el oficio en *La Encarnación* (1572-1577), largo período de aprendizaje mutuo, de enseñanzas compartidas entre el Santo y la Santa de imposible control por lectores y analistas de sus escritos” (DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c, 141).

has left in her own writings. For him, humility is a key virtue for the soul to reach union with God.

John of the Cross¹⁰⁴ explains the transformation of the soul in God, through the image of the night. In his subtle analysis of the spiritual process, John points out that in the first instance, the purification is the result of personal effort, and for this reason it is called the active purification. However, in a second stage, God is the protagonist of the purification, and so John calls it passive. In terms of classical spirituality, the first stage is ascetic while the second one is mystical. For our topic, it is important to note that the Mystical Doctor says that the first fruit of the contemplative night, that is, the mystical action of God in the believer is personal knowledge¹⁰⁵. For him, although the believer has exercised and has made great strides in self-knowledge, it is not until when God begins to act mystically in his life, through dryness, that he really begins to know his littleness¹⁰⁶.

Nevertheless, for John, the mystical action in the spiritual person produces a double illumination. On one hand, as we said, it brings to the attention of the person, his smallness and truth, but also gives an infused knowledge of the greatness of God himself¹⁰⁷. This is important in the doctrine John of the Cross because it clearly defines the dual effect of mystical experience: a level of self-knowledge, unattainable by natural means and a very high-infused theological knowledge of who God is.

Self-knowledge which is the fruit of human effort develops hand in hand with the advancement of other dimensions of knowledge. Growth in self-knowledge may not occur if there is no growth in man's relational dimension with his fellow man and the world around him,

¹⁰⁴ SAN JUAN DE LA CRUZ, *Obras Completas*, Monte Carmelo, Burgos 1993.

¹⁰⁵ “Y éste es el primero y principal provecho que causa esta seca y oscura noche de contemplación: el conocimiento de sí y de su miseria. Porque, demás de que todas las mercedes que Dios hace al alma ordinariamente las hace envueltas en este conocimiento, estas sequedades y vacío de la potencia acerca de la abundancia que antes sentía y la dificultad que halla el alma en las cosas buenas, la hacen conocer de sí la bajeza y miseria que en el tiempo de su prosperidad no echaba de ver” (1N 12, 2).

¹⁰⁶ “De donde la verdad, que el alma antes no conocía, de su miseria: porque en el tiempo que andaba como de fiesta, hallando en Dios mucho gusto y consuelo y arrimo, andaba más satisfecha y contenta, pareciéndole que en algo servía a Dios... oscurecidas sus primeras luces, tiene más de veras éstas en esta tan excelente y necesaria virtud del conocimiento propio, no se teniendo ya en nada ni teniendo satisfacción ninguna de sí; porque ve que de suyo no hace nada ni puede nada”(Ib).

¹⁰⁷ “Y así nos conviene notar otro excelente provecho que hay en esta noche y sequedad del sensitivo apetito, pues habemos venido a dar en él, y es: que en esta noche oscura del apetito... alumbrará Dios al alma, no sólo dándole conocimiento de su bajeza y miseria, como habemos dicho, sino también de la grandeza y excelencia de Dios” (1N 12, 4).

and with the transcendent at the same time. I do not mean intellectual knowledge; rather we are referring to an experiential knowledge, on an existential level, of and from the other.

Talking of humility as such, we realize that St. John of the Cross does not develop a direct and a systematic flow of the virtue of humility as such, unlike the other ascetical authors would do¹⁰⁸. The dispersed teachings throughout his pages demonstrate the importance attached to this evangelical and Christian virtue. Consistent with the methodological principle as remembered by him, it is the contrast to spiritual pride. That helps to shed light on the meaning of humility that as “la virtud contraria al primer vicio capital, que es la soberbia” (N 1, 12, 7). To the common and general ideas on humility, John of the Cross provides very interesting details when dealing with the right spiritual approach towards the graces and favors granted from God. There are three aspects to emphasize in his teaching on humility: general notion, value and practices.

1.4.1. Humility and self-knowledge

According to him, humility begins and ends in the knowledge of self or anthropological existential reality. Its value is derived however from the word and example of Christ¹⁰⁹:

“...traiga un ordinario apetito de imitar a Cristo en todas sus cosas, conformándose con su vida, la cual debe considerar para saberla imitar y haberse en todas las cosas como se hubiera él. 4. Lo segundo, para poder bien hacer esto, cualquiera gusto que se le ofreciere a los sentidos, como no sea puramente para honra y gloria de Dios, renúncielo y quédese vacío de él por amor de Jesucristo, el cual en esta vida no tuvo otro gusto, ni le quiso, que hacer la voluntad de su Padre, lo cual llamaba él su comida y manjar (Jn 4, 34). Pongo ejemplo: si se le ofreciere gusto de oír cosas que no importen para el servicio y honra de Dios” (1 S 13, 2 - 4).

Christ in this case is the supreme truth: “es la suma humildad” (LIB 3, 6). Moreover:

“Aún llega a tanto la ternura y verdad de amor con que el inmenso Padre regala y engrandece a esta humilde y amorosa alma... que se sujeta a ella verdaderamente para la engrandecer, como si él fuese

¹⁰⁸ EULOGIO PACHO, *Humildad*, en *Diccionario de San Juan de la Cruz*, (Dir. EULOGIO PACHO), Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2000, 761.

¹⁰⁹ *Ib.*, 762.

su esclavo y ella su señor... como si el fuese su esclavo y ella fuese su Dios: ¡tan profunda es la humildad y dulzura de Dios!” (CB 27, 1).

True humility is intimately related to self-knowledge and has its concrete expression in the nakedness spiritual, which leads directly to the exercise of charity.

“En esta desnudez halla el espiritual su quietud y descanso, porque, no codiciando nada, nada le fatiga hacia arriba y nada le oprime hacia abajo, porque está en el centro de su humildad. Porque, cuando algo codicia, en eso mismo se fatiga” (1S 13,13).

Humility reaches its fullness and authenticity when selfishness radically disappears and the soul is configured to Christ; then true union is achieved:

“Y cuando viniere a quedar resuelto en nada, que será la suma humildad, quedará hecha la unión espiritual entre el alma y Dios, que es el mayor y más alto estado a que en esta vida se puede llegar. No consiste, pues, en recreaciones y gustos, y sentimientos espirituales, sino en una viva muerte de cruz sensitiva y espiritual, esto es, interior y exterior” (2S 7,11).

Climbing this summit is a matter of time and effort, as it is in acquiring virtue or habit. The concrete way forward alerts St. John, is to assume nothing of oneself before God. A certain sign of true humility is to accept personal limitations and imperfections. Humble souls “en las imperfecciones que se ven caer, con humildad se sufren, y con blandura de espíritu y temor amoroso de Dios esperan en él” (1N 2,8).

1.4.2. Need for evangelical humility

He adds other reasons to emphasize the need for this essential virtue to the ultimate motivation of its evangelical virtue, as an imitation of Christ. One of them is its value to discover and overcome the snares of the devil¹¹⁰. Assuming the doctrine of Christ he repeats that no one will understand his own deceptions for instance “sin oración, mortificación y humildad” (CB 3, 9). Some of his spiritual councils follow in the same direction: “Eso que pretendes y lo que más

¹¹⁰ EULOGIO PACHO, *Humildad*, en *Diccionario de San Juan de la Cruz*, o.c, 763.

deseas no lo hallarás por esa vía tuya ni por la alta contemplación, sino en la mucha humildad y rendimiento de corazón” (Av 1,40).

In the precautions or *Cautelas*, as well as in the *Councils to religious*, John addresses the virtue of humility as follows.

“Y este segundo aviso es totalmente necesario al religioso para cumplir con su estado y hallar la verdadera humildad, quietud interior y gozo en el Espíritu Santo. Y, si así no lo ejercita, ni sabe ser religioso, ni aun a lo que vino a la Religión; ni sabe buscar a Cristo, sino a sí mismo; ni hallará paz en su alma, ni dejará de pecar y turbarse muchas veces”(Avisos, 4).

Following in the same line, he addresses the same aspects in his letters. His teaching on this virtue could be summarized in the following letter:

“Dios nos libre de nosotros. Denos lo que él se agradare, y nunca nos lo muestre hasta que él quiera... y nosotros ni verlo de los ojos, ni gozarlo, porque no desfloremos a Dios el gusto que tiene en la humildad y desnudez de nuestro corazón y desprecio de las cosas del siglo por él” (Cta 23).

1.4.3. Practical application

When John of the cross develops this teaching, he has in mind the spiritual persons who are seriously indulged in the ascetical struggle and have passed the first stages, which he believes are still beginners; they are still attached to themselves and dominated by impulses of pride. The *aprovechados*, on the other hand feel that they have gotten rid of this burden, upon finding themselves to be favored with special graces from God. When the soul attains a little of extraordinary things “muchas veces se le ingiere secretamente cierta opinión de sí, de que ya es algo delante de Dios, lo cual es contra humildad” (S 2, 11,5). They are subtle remnants of pride, which have to be purified by passive night of the senses (N 1, 2).

Even worse is intellectual pride: the pride of refusing to accept or trust anything that fails to make sense to one’s own over-rated intellect. Such a failure to recognize one’s own reason in particular is an indication of a profound blindness, but such is the power of the ego that one can fall victim to without recognizing it. An important safeguard against this kind of pride is to form

the habit of checking one's opinion against that of others, and of seeking advice and not making the mistake of thinking we always know best. John notes that a humble person does not dare to deal with God independently, nor can he be completely satisfied without human counsel and direction. God is desirous of this, for to strengthen truth on the basis of natural reason, he draws near to those who come together in order to know Him (2S 22,11).

The overall approach that these spiritual persons should keep is to always subject all things to their spiritual directors, for among other reasons:

“...porque para la humildad y sujeción y mortificación del alma conviene dar parte de todo, aunque todo ello no haga caso ni lo tenga en nada Porque hay algunas almas que sienten mucho en decir las tales cosas, por parecerles que no son nada, y no saben cómo las tomará la persona con quien las han de tratar, lo cual es poca humildad y, por lo mismo, es menester sujetarse a decirlo” (2S 22,18).

The conclusion of John of the Cross that is applicable to all extraordinary graces is formulated as follows:

“Por tanto, el alma pura, cauta, y sencilla y humilde, con tanta fuerza y cuidado ha de resistir y desechar las revelaciones y otras visiones, como las muy peligrosas, porque no hay necesidad de quererlas, sino de no quererlas para ir a la unión de amor” (S 2, 28,6; el. 2, 29,12).

Essentially, what matters more is humble love: “Cuando en las palabras y conceptos juntamente el alma va amando y sintiendo con humildad y reverencia de Dios, es señal que anda por allí el Espíritu Santo, el cual siempre que hace algunas mercedes, las hace envueltas en esto” (S 2,29,11). In spite of personal efforts it is not possible to be cleaned of all the remnant of pride until the purifying work of the passive night does get rid of all slag through dryness and true knowledge of personal misery. Only then can true humility be acquired; (1N 12, 7; 13, 1).

1.5. Thomas a Kempis

Reading her works, there is no evidence that Teresa read the work of Thomas a Kempis; however, the reader would be left without doubt that Teresa was aware and read about him, but not under the name of *The Imitation of Christ*. Some nun testified that this writing was like

Teresa's bedside book¹¹¹. The work that was recommended, the '*Contemptus mundi*', was that of Thomas a Kempis, also known in the sixteenth century as *El Gersoncito* or *The Imitation of Christ*. He writes:

“Learn to obey, you dust; learn to bring down yourself, you earth and slime, and throw down yourself under all men's feet. Learn, I say, to break your will, and humbly to submit yourself to all. Wax hot against yourself, and suffer not pride to have place within you: but show yourself so lowly and simple, that all may tread you under foot like mire in the street”¹¹².

The appeal of Kempis also provides evidence that core ideas of Christianity continued with small changes through the Reformation. He wrote his book in the early fifteenth century as a manual for people who desired to introduce the ideas of monastic piety to lay society.

It would not be a surprise that Teresa recommends it among her selected authors and works to the nuns, some that would certainly be known to her. It is unthinkable, and I find it hard to accept, to do so without having first read it herself. Thomas a Kempis speaks eloquently about the difference between wisdom and knowledge in *The Imitation of Christ*, about having a humble opinion of oneself:

“If a man knows himself well and truly, he sees and admits his weaknesses and faults; and he does not glory in any praise that others may give him... It is possible to desire to know too much; in that desire lie many idle distractions and much foolishness. Some persons are learned and enjoy displaying their knowledge so that they will be thought wise. There are many things we each *could* know, but would bring us no spiritual benefit. It is simply not wisdom to be distracted by anything that does not assist our spiritual progress”¹¹³.

¹¹¹ “Ciertamente la Santa aconseja que la obra forme parte de una pequeña biblioteca que los conventos de monjas descalzas deben de tener, aunque sean pobres en la arquitectura de sus casas y en su vivir diario. Los buenos libros, bien seleccionados, servirían para la formación de las monjas, para llenar la hora de lectura espiritual diaria prevista en las *Constituciones* (n. 6), y como recurso pedagógico para hacer la oración meditada en las celdas o en el coro conventual. “Tenga cuenta la priora con que haya buenos libros, en especial *Cartujanos*, *Flos sanctorum*, *Contemptus mundi*” (DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c, 125).

¹¹² THOMAS A KEMPIS, *Imitation of Christ*, o.c, 148.

¹¹³ *Ib.*, 32.

When we put our intellects in this perspective, it becomes clear that intellectual competition is pointless and feelings of superiority over non-intellectuals are misguided. As Thomas a Kempis says, “We have no reason to puff ourselves up because of any of our talents”¹¹⁴. There is no need to look down upon others’ intellects; we should be looking up at God.

Even as we contemplate the infinite difference between God’s intellect and our own, we realize that God created us in His image and that He has given us unique gifts and abilities. All human beings have talents and abilities, and all of them owe those talents solely to God. Recognition of our dependence on God’s gifts should rid us of excessive confidence in ourselves (pride) and encourage humble gratitude toward Him for all He has given us, including our intellectual abilities. It should also encourage the third essential element of *humility*: esteem of others. The humble intellectual recognizes that God has given others gifts, both intellectual and non-intellectual that are just as valuable as his own. He appreciates and reveres God’s work in others. He recognizes that there are areas in which his neighbors’ gifts exceed his own, and he rejoices in the talents God has given them.

Although the humble man does not think of himself as praiseworthy, especially when compared to God’s greatness, he is quick to praise the good qualities in others. Thomas a Kempis says that to be humble is “not to think highly of oneself, [and] always to think highly of others”¹¹⁵, and also:

“Learn to obey, you dust; learn to bring down yourself, you earth and slime, and throw down yourself under all men’s feet. Learn, I say, to break your will, and humbly to submit yourself to all. Wax hot against yourself, and suffer not pride to have place within you: but show yourself so lowly and simple, that all may tread you under foot like mire in the street”¹¹⁶.

In T. a Kempis, one finds in Christ a role model that required mortification both of pride and the concomitant desire for power and esteem; that we must perform humble works when we are unable to perform higher ones.

¹¹⁴ THOMAS A KEMPIS, *Imitation of Christ*, 32.

¹¹⁵ *Ib.*, 32.

¹¹⁶ *Ib.*, 148.

1.6. The Franciscan school

Franciscan life is a way of living the Gospel following the foundations and footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, but it surpasses that, as it has been a permanent source of information and spiritual formation of all time. St Teresa, a woman with neither academic culture nor systematic formation was open to all the doctrinal currents coming her way. From a young age, she was lucky to meet with Franciscan authors and some of their works that guided her prayer life and her early mystical experiences. The Franciscan spirit was one of the best schools for her. We will present some of these authors, which I deem to be more relevant here.

1.6.1. Francisco of Osuna

The extent of Francisco de Osuna's¹¹⁷ influence on Teresa of Avila is a subject of much scholarly enquiry. It is difficult to make specific claims, but in style, imagery and in content there are many similarities. The principal work he is known for is *The Third Spiritual Alphabet*, a treatise on recollection, the “narrow gate” we must walk with no exception. Teresa spoke clearly of her reliance on *The Third Alphabet* as a guide for the practice of prayer from an early stage of her life as a religious. She was given the book to read by an uncle sympathetic to her need. It was a timely gift and Teresa speaks of how she began to follow the path of recollection. She went so far as to say that the book was ‘her master’. It was a guide through the intensities of her religious experience and at a later stage a resource for her teaching others the practice of recollection.

1.6.1.1. Prayer of recollection/Recogimiento

The piece of writing which was most important at least and that gave him more fame was *The Third Alphabet*, which was published in Toledo 1527, the first by this author, in which he explained his experience as a teacher of shared prayer with the community of the friars and laity of Salceda¹¹⁸. In Spain, there was already a long tradition of prayer which was used as a means to reform the Benedictines, Dominicans and Franciscans, valuing the liturgical, personal, mental and vocal prayer. The method of meditative prayer most used was imported from Europe,

¹¹⁷ Francisco formulated maxims as memorable and pithy guides for meditation that he arranged alphabetically. These six alphabets created the structure for his series of treatises, each alphabet following a different spiritual theme - the passion, prayer and ascetic practices and most notably, the practice of recollection. This alphabet describes in detail the complex psychological processes of recollection and offers advice and signs of progress along the way.

¹¹⁸ DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c, 190.

especially from the Nordic School of Modern Devotion, and which was very complicated, observing rigorously fixed acts, which obscured spontaneity and freedom in prayer¹¹⁹.

Osuna, as a reformed Franciscan, knew these the methods and endless hours devoted to vocal prayer in this same Order. Therefore he proposes a new method which entails in the internalization of the person in his own *self* to meditate or contemplate the truths of the Christian faith. D. de Pablo Maroto writes:

“La novedad no estaba en los contenidos de la meditación, sino en el tono afectivo con que se hacían las consideraciones, el uso de potencias y sentidos recogidos en el escenario interior de la conciencia, y en el diálogo amoroso que allí se podía entablar con Dios o con Cristo”¹²⁰.

The technique of this ‘recollection’ in the interior seemed a merely psychological method, with the control of external and internal senses, body posture, solitude and silence; but in reality it was an exercise in theological life, faith, hope and charity. It was an ascetic exercise that could conclude in union with God, the goal in the prayer life of the great mystics.

1.6.1.2. Influences and echoes in the life of St. Teresa

It would be excessive to say that the method of prayer of ‘recollection’ was successful and spread only through the writings of St. Teresa of Jesus “porque se conocen cinco ediciones castellanas del Tercer Abecedario en el siglo XVI, una en el XVII, y otras seis en el XX, pero creo que hechas no para resucitar el antiguo método, sino como tema de estudio para los especialistas”¹²¹. It is true that it become ‘the Teresian’ method par excellence in its ascetic stage, and it was circulated worldwide by the countless editions of her works, especially as exposed in the *Way of Perfection*.

So strong was the experience that when Teresa writes as a teacher of prayer, she will remember this as the best method in the ascetic phase of spiritual life. If we could speak of the ‘Teresian’ method of mental prayer, we would not hesitate to say that it is that of the ‘*prayer of recollection*’, that she recommends with such conviction and warmth in the *Way of Perfection* (especially chaps. 28-29 and see chaps. 24-26). She describes it as an ‘excellent way’ (Ib., 28, 5)

¹¹⁹ Ib.

¹²⁰ DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c., 190.

¹²¹ Ib., 192.

with Him the soul acquires ‘lordship’ and ‘freedom” (Ib., 28, 7 and 11), alleging that the believer knows that his interior is ‘a palace of the greatest wealth, his whole building of the greatest wealth’ (Ib., 28, 9). Although she does never quote it with its proper name, there are several resonances of this writing in her doctrine.

Francisco de Osuna in his treatise, *The Third Spiritual Alphabet*, dedicates a chapter to the discussion of humility, which he considers the ‘sovereign virtue’: that this virtue (humility) assures the heart and explains the doubts that usually accompany the prayer of recollection, where sometimes usually one experiences such wondrous things from God... that the soul wonders if all this is from God or if the devil has transformed himself in order to deceive the soul ... if you are humble, you will be on solid ground¹²².

Humility is thus the touchstone of the spiritual graces received from the prayer of recollection, that is, a virtue all the more necessary for women, who were considered more susceptible than men to delusions. This very Franciscan humility provides assurance against self-doubts.. Osuna further writes: “...la humildad debe ser como un abrir de los cimientos y hacer la zanja para el edificio; de manera que sobre ella se debe fundar todo ejercicio, y debe ser raíz de todo árbol que ha de dar fruto; y si este nombre de raíz pertenece a la caridad, sea la humildad el estiércol que conserva todo árbol y lo hace llevar fruto; la cual por ser a todo ejercicio necesaria se figura en la sal”¹²³. Through Osuna, Teresa developed her teaching that humility is the basis for everything and that ‘entering within’ is the means by which we find Christ in prayer. Further, Osuna’s way was primarily affective; the key ingredient behind the Teresian concept of mental prayer *as a loving conversation between friends* (Vida, 8, 5).

1.6.2. Fray Bernardino de Laredo

One of the great spiritual persons sixteenth century Teresa would have read was Bernardino de Laredo¹²⁴, a Franciscan. She discovered him belatedly, but he served providentially in her spiritual discernment, confirming the truth of her own mystical experiences.

¹²² FRANCISCO DE OSUNA, *Tercer abecedario espiritual de Francisco de Osuna*. (Introducción y edición preparada por SATURNINO LÓPEZ SANTIDRIÁN), Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid 1998, 502.

¹²³ Ib., 498.

¹²⁴ “Mirando libros para ver si sabría decir la oración que tenía, hallé en uno que llaman *Subida del Monte Sion*, en lo que toca a unión del alma con Dios, todas las señales que yo tenía en aquel *no pensar nada*, que esto era lo que yo más decía; que *no podía pensar nada* cuando tenía aquella oración. Y señalé con unas rayas las partes que eran, y dile el libro para que él [Francisco de Laredo] y el otro clérigo que he dicho, santo y siervo de Dios lo mirasen y me dijese 10 que había de hacer” (V 23, 12).

He was one of the Franciscans writers and directors in which Teresa found early life experiences rather than theoretical illumination, which she sought and found in other Church groups and theologians. Maroto asserts:

“Es seguro que la Santa leyó el libro del lego franciscano Bernardino de Laredo *Subida del Monte Sión*, en el momento en que experimentaba en la oración de quietud que ‘no podía pensar nada’, y no sabía explicarla a sus directores de espíritu (V 23, 12). La fenomenología de esa oración mística la explica el autor sólo en la segunda edición remodelada de la obra, en su III parte, cap. 27, edición de Sevilla, 1538, o en la de Medina del Campo de 1542. Una de estas dos fue la que leyó la Santa”¹²⁵.

He especially became famous as a mystical writer to publish in Sevilla *The Ascent of Mount Zion* in 1535. In it, Laredo explores a path of spirituality, from the Middle Ages, which was practiced in the houses renovated Franciscan, being, other books Spanish mystique of this century, a historical monument of the first order: the silent witnesses are not only a doctrinal synthesis, but a life. The focus of the first period of the spiritual life is the meeting the man with himself and his fate and destiny, his own self-knowledge, concluding with the ‘annihilation’, a term common among many spiritual persons in the sixteenth century, that is, recognition of nothingness and his/her own relationship with God¹²⁶.

Focusing on his writings in *The Ascent of Mount Zion*, he dedicates the first part of his work to humility as self-knowledge:

“Fundados en la humildad, que es la llave de este juego (sin ella todo es nada), todos osemos entrar al desierto del monte, de la alta contemplación por las pisadas que nos mostró nuestro humilde Doctor Cristo y aquí no se saca estado,... mas el fraile, como fraile, y el casado sea casado y viva como casado en las reglas de casado, que en ellas hallará a Dios, si le busca con verdad, como él quiere, y en espíritu con humildad ser buscado; salva siempre con aquesto la reverenda abstinencia matrimonial de la providencia simple, limpia y sin doblez que deben a su conciencia, mayormente en los tiempos de la sacra comunión; en lo demás, conozcan y guarden su estado”¹²⁷.

¹²⁵ DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c, 61.

¹²⁶ *Ib.*, 197.

¹²⁷ BERNARDINO DE LAREDO, *Místicos Franciscanos Españoles*, vol II, Editorial Católica, Madrid 1948¹, 47.

Regarding self-knowledge:

“No basta conocernos con la manera ordinaria que se remata en decir que soy malo y que no conozco a Dios ni merezco el pan que como, y lo demás que aquí se suele decir, con tanto que no me lo digan otros ni piensen esto de mí; no así, no así; que aquesto es casi fingido y no basta para nuestra humillación, porque para conversar con Cristo, que es suma sabiduría y espejo de humildad, mas fundamento requiere que, por cierta cuenta y reglas venga a conocimiento de quien es hasta haber asco de sí; y sepa que tiene pocas palabra; para poder intimar de su Vileza, y que lo que él siente de sí y sabe eso desearía que todos supiesen, si sin ofensa de Dios lo pudiesen saber. Mas porque, si los hombres me conociesen como me conozco yo sé que me aborrecerían, y irían contra lo que manda Dios; que como así, amen al prójimo; y sería ofensa muy cierta de quien deseamos servir”¹²⁸.

The content of *The Ascent of Mount Zion* may be summarized in these points: knowledge of one’s humiliation or nothingness, imitation of the patient Christ and contemplation of his divinity in His works and attributes. Through these stages the soul goes on an upward gradient to reach the goal of his supernatural perfection¹²⁹. The important thing is that the spiritual path begins with a desire to clarify the great themes of philosophy and anthropology: where we are coming from, whom or what we are, where we are going and how to master the low instincts. Secondly, the Christian finds Christ and submits himself/her to Him.

1.6.3. Fray Bernabé de Palma

His historical background is not well known with certainty; it is only through some critical sources of the hagiographic character, such as the Franciscan reporters to whose spiritual family he belongs. He was born in Palma del Río (Córdoba) in 1469; he appears to have been of a humble background, where he exercised the art of gardening with her father. Aged 22, he became a lay friar of the reformed Franciscans in the province of Ángeles in Andalusia. He was gatekeeper in the convent of Belén, his hometown, with a reputation for holiness in mystical

¹²⁸ BERNARDINO DE LAREDO, *Místicos Franciscanos Españoles*, o.c, 45.

¹²⁹ ENRIQUE LLAMAS MARTINEZ, *Una aportación del P. Fedele de Ros a la historia de la espiritualidad española: su obra sobre Bernardino de Loredó*, OFM: Revista de Espiritualidad 9(1950) 235.

phenomena and miraculous activities, according to the reporter Andrés de Guadalupe. He died there on 14 October 1532¹³⁰.

It is probably impossible to speak of an explicit teaching of Fray Bernabé de Palma on which he would have influenced St. Teresa because there is no documentation proving of her direct reading of his writings. But if there is any perceived doctrinal resonance pointing to closeness in vocabulary and doctrine, it would rather be a problematic attempt to approach them and propose Bernabé de Palma as doctrinal source for Saint Teresa.

The only presumption is that Teresa would have read or heard of his works, though there is no tangible evidence attributing to that possibility. The theme *of humility and to walk in truth*¹³¹ is something that the Franciscan mystic proposes clearly as the foundation of spiritual and the right relationship with God. In the life of Saint Teresa, this theme assumes an unparalleled depth and is one of the Teresian central themes.

1.7. The Jesuit school

It is a well known fact that St. Teresa had a close relationship with theologians of the Society of Jesus¹³² with whom she had a very special relationship, treating them as her ‘masters’. It is difficult to summarize what Teresa would have listened to, learned or assimilated from the fountain of St. Ignatius, since 1555, when she first met them in Ávila, until the day of her death in 1582. From them, Teresa had an indirect access of St. Ignatius’ thoughts.

1.7.1. Self-knowledge

Ignatius of Loyola and his examination-oriented teaching and self-knowledge marks an important milestone in the field of spirituality. Almost all subsequent spirituality is inspired by

¹³⁰ DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c, 206.

¹³¹ The theme of Humility as truth, or to walk in truth assumes the core of her teaching on humility, and as a matter of fact, it is a virtue without which the Christian life is impossible. All other virtues revolve around it. I will expound elaborately in the second chapter of this dissertation.

¹³² “La Santa tuvo el primer encuentro con ellos en Ávila, monja Carmelita en el convento de *La Encarnación*, en el año 1555. La Compañía de Jesús había fundado en Ávila, en la primavera del año 1554, un colegio junto a la iglesia de *San Gil* ‘y un hospitalico que estaba junto. Es la mejor parte de la ciudad, lo más alto y en medio de todos los monasterios, que casi todos se ven, y el campo por todas cuatro partes y mucha parte de la ciudad’, como escribe el P. Hernandálvarez. El fue el alma de la fundación, profesó en la Compañía siendo sacerdote, de la noble familia de los Águila, hermano de Doña Mencía del Águila, esposa de Francisco de Salcedo, gran amigo de la Santa. En casa de este matrimonio ejemplar se hospedaban los jesuitas de paso por Ávila desde 1550, y por medio de D. Francisco, ‘el caballero santo’, pudo entrar Doña Teresa en contacto en Ávila con los confesores jesuitas, los PP. Cetina en 1555, Prádanos, san Francisco de Borja y Baltasar Álvarez en años sucesivos” (DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c, 224).

the proposal of the *Spiritual Exercises* in which Ignatius distributed in an intensive ‘course’ of four weeks, the first dedicated to self-knowledge and the next three following the discovery of the way of Jesus. Since the beginning of the process of conversion, his keen intuition allowed him to perceive the importance of self-knowledge in spiritual progress, in promoting growth of the individual in self-control and inner freedom and at the same time, in the knowledge of God and his will¹³³. Ignacio began to know God from self-knowledge¹³⁴.

The original title of the Ignatian work is “*Exercicios espirituales para vencer a sí mismo y ordenar su vida, sin determinarse por afección alguna que desordenada sea*”, and already he allows us a glimpse on one of the central axis of Ignatian spirituality, based on the self-knowledge and self-control for the development of one’s potentialities in a better service of God and salvation of souls¹³⁵. From here it becomes necessary to work on a level in which Ignatius managed to glimpse on the deep roots of human contradictions beyond love and human freedom¹³⁶.

Within the exercises, one of the elements that best shows the interest of Ignatius for promoting self-knowledge is the famous “*Reglas para en alguna manera sentir y conocer las varias mociones que en la ánima se causan: las buenas para recibir y las malas para lanzar; y son más propias para la primera semana*”, although in reality it will not be limited to the first week¹³⁷.

This constant effort of spiritual discernment gives the person the ability to know themselves better and to dominate, control or direct their life with natural transparency. With this effort, the person should manifest his conscience thoroughly, and with humility to put it in the hands of the superior. Discovering consciousness in dialogue and in a space of intimacy and trust promotes greater comprehensiveness and depth to the process¹³⁸.

From the Ignatian experience we learn that self-knowledge, on putting us in contact with our own truth, it helps prevent us from falling into a false image of ourselves and of the world

¹³³ A. ARAÚJO SANTOS, *El sentido del examen de conciencia ignaciano en el proceso de crecimiento humano y espiritual del cristiano hoy*: ITAICI 84 (2011) 50.

¹³⁴ J. GARCÍA DE CASTRO VALDÉS, *El Dios emergente. Sobre la “consolación sin causa”*, Mensajero – Sal Terra, Bilbao- Santander, 2001, 229.

¹³⁵ J. M. GONZÁLEZ GARCÍA, *Del humanismo renacentista de Loyola a la razón barroca de Gracián: conocimiento y dominio de sí mismo*: Eikasía, 37 (2011) 138.

¹³⁶ J. R. ÁLVAREZ B., *El Conocimiento de uno mismo. Alcances y riesgos psicológicos de la auto observación en los ejercicios ignaciano*, 5, <http://eduignaciana.tripod.com/docum/mismo.pdf>

¹³⁷ J. M. GONZÁLEZ GARCÍA, o.c., 139.

¹³⁸ *Ib.*, 140.

and, that self knowledge is at the same time the way to know the will of God and the means necessary for the person to correct defects and cultivate virtues. The rules proposed by Ignatius for discernment remain a productive pool of self-knowledge.

We will now direct our eyes at the virtue of humility as such: the Ignatian spirituality is profoundly informed by the humility¹³⁹ that looks outside oneself to see God at work in the world. For Ignatius, “la esencia de la humildad consiste en centrarse en el otro, disponer el corazón fuera de su propio interés para que, olvidándose de sí, se entregue a Jesús, a su vida y misión”¹⁴⁰. In the second week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the exercitant is invited to ponder on how to make an election, having pondered in the first week over the issue of sin and the love of God; this meditation prepare the exercitant to make a fundamental choice about the conduct of his/ her life¹⁴¹. It is not just a choice among many; rather it is a total surrender to Christ or choosing to conform one’s life with God’s will. How does one become the kind of person who can correctly discern God’s self-communication to the seeker? Ignatius suggests that humility is the foundation, and he sketches humility in three degrees or stages.

1.7.2. The first kind of humility

The first kind of humility is necessary for one’s eternal salvation, and consists in subjecting and humbling the self, as far as the person can, so that the person obeys the law of God in everything; “Ignacio considera la sumisión a la ley e Dios como la forma inferior de humildad, que se manifieste en la decisión de no deliberar interiormente si cometer o no un pecado mortal”¹⁴². The first degree, the rejection of mortal sin, it is a basic recognition of the sovereignty of God. Mortal sin fundamentally disrupts the creature’s submission to God; so making an election based on the desire to be of service to God is clearly incompatible with mortal sin. This level of humility is thus understood as obedience to the will of God, it is the first movement towards the love of God.

¹³⁹ “En la espiritualidad ignaciana, la virtud de la humildad es la actitud característica fundamental que capacita a la persona para que alcance su fin, que es ‘alabar, hacer reverencia y servir a Dios nuestro Señor y, mediante esto, salvar su anima’” (LISA A. FULLAM, *Humildad*, en: *Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana*, vol. II, (JOSE GARCIA DE CASTRO Dir.), Mensajero, Bilbao 2007, 957).

¹⁴⁰ *Ib.*

¹⁴¹ *Ib.*

¹⁴² *Ib.*, 959.

1.7.3. The second kind of humility

The second kind of humility is more perfect than the first. This second level or degree of humility means “that I neither desire nor am I inclined to have riches rather than poverty, to seek honor rather than dishonor, to desire a long life rather than a short life, provided I would promote equally the service of God our Lord and the salvation of my soul” (SpEx No. 166). The person has it if they find themselves at a point where they do not desire, nor even prefer to be rich rather than poor, to seek fame than disgrace, to desire a long life rather than a short life, provided it is the same for the service of God and the good of my soul; and along with this I would not deliberately set about committing a venial sin, even for the whole of creation I under threat to my own life¹⁴³. “Se trata cultivar el deseo y decidirse a seguir mas perfectamente la voluntad de Dios”¹⁴⁴. This is what is known as Ignatian ‘indifference’. Humility thus understood eliminates one’s personal desire as finally decisive.

To move beyond this to the indifference of the second degree requires us to focus our attention beyond the attractions of our own appetites to a position of indifference to them. The shift from the second degree of humility to the third is a fundamental shift in aspect in the second degree, the state of indifference; the exercitant's focus is still on himself or herself: *I* am indifferent to wealth, *I* am indifferent to fame, *I* will not be swayed by the petty inducements of venial sin. In the third degree, the focus of attention is no longer the exercitant, but Christ¹⁴⁵ and his service.

1.7.4. The third kind of humility

The third kind of humility is the most perfect humility. It consists in choosing poverty and the desire to be reproached and despised by the others for the sake of imitating the Poor Christ, who was despised, “parece imposible quedarse indiferente ante la riqueza y los oprobios, y se eligen estos”¹⁴⁶. It is present when given that the first and second kinds are included, and supposing equal praise and glory of the Divine Majesty in order to imitate Christ Our Lord and to be actually more like him, the person wants and chooses poverty with Christ-poor rather than wealth with Christ in great humility rather than fame, and I desire more to be thought a fool and

¹⁴³ IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *The Spiritual Exercises*, (Trans by GEORGE GANSS, SJ.), Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis, 1992, 315.

¹⁴⁴ LISA A. FULLAM, *Humildad*, o.c., 959.

¹⁴⁵ IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *The Spiritual Exercises*, o.c., 315.

¹⁴⁶ *Ib.*

an idiot for Christ, who first was taken to be such, rather than to be thought wise and prudent in this world¹⁴⁷.

The simple fact is that Christ was poor; if the exercitant seeks to imitate Christ, and thus Jesus' utter obedience to God, he or she must be centered in Christ, as Paul says: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Ga12, 19-20). This is the goal, that humility opens our eyes to what that means by drawing our attention away from ourselves to Christ. It is a way in which the person is freed from attachments in order to be available for the serve of the Kingdom; "el movimiento clave de los tres grados de humildad, sin embargo consiste en que reflejan una paulatina purificación de la entrega a la obra de Dios"¹⁴⁸.

Humility therefore, is a 'virtue of looking at Christ', "consiste en fomentar en uno mismo el centrarse en el otro"¹⁴⁹. For the Christian, the central, essential and the magnetic (Other), who is Christ; to whom their attention is drawn is Jesus. In this line, then all have to aspire to practice humility in the imitation and in solidarity with Christ for the service of the kingdom of God. The *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola is a series of intense meditations on Jesus' life, not as an end in itself, but as a way of enabling those formed by the *Exercises* to seek to live in such a way as to direct their whole lives and work to "the greater glory of God and the help of souls"¹⁵⁰. The person so formed becomes a 'contemplative in action', that is, a person whose life becomes a working, acting prayer.

Humility is basically a 'virtue that enables us to see'. It is the virtue that perfects our ability to see through ourselves at the larger world we see with less distortion who we strive to be. To value humility as a virtue is to recognize that the instrument is perfected when it vanishes in use its perfection will make it an avenue of transport, and a moment in the life of a moral community. Humility perfects the moral vision of the human person in a paradox of selfless mindfulness. Humility is the perfection of the art of paying attention: it is the perfection of self-knowledge in context.

¹⁴⁷ IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *The Spiritual Exercises*, o.c, 315.

¹⁴⁸ LISA A. FULLAM, *Humildad*, o.c, 963.

¹⁴⁹ *Ib.*

¹⁵⁰ LISA A. FULLAN, o.c, 181.

Conclusion

Throughout all of these multiple sources, beginning from the scripture to the church fathers, we have explored how St. Teresa draws from them her inspiration to develop her virtue of humility. I have established that her idea for this virtue is well founded. She draws from the richness of the scripture, from the church Tradition, relying on her ‘masters’ as well as her real life experience, as a factor that is well experimented. From this study then, and summarizing from the figures so far seen: we can draw a defining thread: humility, in essence, calls us to look beyond ourselves, to know our place by the practice of the other-centeredness. It boils down into two basic aspects: the quality of humility as self-knowledge, and the practices by which we acquire humility. It is evident that humility is a virtue of knowing the *truth about ourselves*. To know ourselves truly is to know ourselves as sinners in need of the mercy of God in Christ; humility then, is the mark of human wisdom.

I have argued here, that the virtue of humility is a virtue of knowing one’s place by other-centeredness: the basic act of humility is to turn our attention beyond ourselves. I then needed to distinguish this virtue from the nearly parallel virtue of magnanimity. I argued, with Thomas, that the essential distinction between humility and magnanimity is in their different modes. Next, I needed to establish continuity between humility as I depicted it here and the Christian tradition of that virtue: I looked to Augustine, the Franciscans, Ignatius, Bernard, John of the Cross as well as Thomas a Kempis, and to Benedict as cross-references. The same understanding of humility holds there as well; humility is self-knowledge by other-centeredness: the distinctively Christian spin on humility is that the other in whom we are to be centered is God or Christ, and that the poor, the marginalized and the outcasts have first claim on our moral attention.

We draw our inspiration from Christ himself; hence, humility for any Christian consists in self-emptying. This emptying is not only in accord with the example of Christ who emptied himself but it is also a participation of Christ’s internal state of humility which culminate even in *Christ glorified*. Since the participation in the state of humility is a participation in the life of the glorious Christ, then humility unites us with the glorious Christ. Therefore, the more a man humbles himself, the more he unites himself with Christ and His glory.

Humility constructed this way carries with it a double resonance for an ethics of virtue. First, humility may be understood to work in two different ways in spiritual knowing, as a

general virtue of self-knowledge by comparison, but also as an essential aspect of the acquisition of virtues in general. Thomas Aquinas would say that humility clears away pride that derails us from seeking virtue at all. As such, humility is a virtue and a 'virtue of virtue'. Thus, it offers us a picture of truth that is personal rather than abstract, communal rather than individual and process rather than status.

Second, this elucidation of humility both ties the virtue to traditional accounts of humility and retrieves it from an unfortunately common mis-definition: of humility as the act of self-abasement. Here I have analyzed humility as a virtue, properly speaking. Third, I have offered an analysis of Thomas' handling of a problematic point in his project of sorting out 'Christian Aristotelianism'.

I have expounded a second role for humility that has been hinted at but not developed in previous accounts: humility is a meta-virtue as well as a virtue. The two-fold function of this virtue deserves further analysis as a window into the function of virtues in general. By outlining humility as a virtue, that humility points us to a vision of moral truth as a personal, communal process of discovery.

Humility is a condition and inner disposition is synonymous to poverty of spirit, which is consequently translated "into a total dependence of God". For Mary, for instance, humility as a condition and inner disposition is synonymous to poverty of spirit, which is consequently translated "into a total dependence of God"

It is recognition of the insufficiency of oneself, of one's indignity and insignificance before the Lord, since it involves a complete and absolute openness to the Father. It is a confirmation of the Beatitudes and the conviction of the '*anawim*' of Yahweh. This is the only way in which the humble person ought to act. Recognition oneself alone is not enough, rather is this ought to embody the willingness and disposition to accept foremost the gift of the will of God as well, which is manifested to us.

In the case of Ignatius, self-knowledge is for the exercitant is the fruit of the discernment process that has made the motions that are caused in the soul. That is, in Ignatius self-knowledge is the result of spiritual discernment of the motions. Alternatively, it knowledge of the movements that come from God, distinguishing them from that which come from the evil spirit or the disordered affections. The knowledge acquired by the exercitant is the way in which to

know the will of God; therefore for Teresa and ant the other figures tacked here, self-knowledge is the result of an encounter with God.

It is the recognition of the insufficiency of oneself, of one's indignity and insignificance before the Lord, since it involves a complete and absolute openness to the Father. It is a confirmation of the Beatitudes and the stance of the *poor ones* of Yahweh. This is the only way in which the humble person ought to act. Recognition oneself alone is not enough, rather is this ought to embody the willingness and disposition to accept foremost the gift of the will of God as well, which is manifested to us. In the following chapter, we will concretize these conclusions in depth, basing ourselves entirely on how Teresa develops the virtue. It is worth noting that, her idea becomes real in the experimentation applied in real-life situations.

CHAPTER II

THE VIRTUE OF HUMILITY¹⁵¹ IN THE TERESIAN SCHOOL OF THOUGHT, IN HER WRITINGS AND WAY OF LIVING: HUMILITY AS WALKING IN TRUTH AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the meaning of *humility* in the writings of Teresa of Jesus. Primarily, I will rely on the *Obras completas* as representing her understanding of the virtue. The *Obras completas* will be the primary source of reference because they include Teresa's attempt to provide her sisters with a clear and a comprehensive account of the dynamics of life.

It will examine the most important theme of *humility* mainly in the *Way of Perfection*, the *Interior Castle and the Autobiography*, (not excluding the rest of her writings, but these will be quoted with more frequency), namely *humility as walking in truth and self-knowledge*. These themes recur in many of Teresa's writings, particularly in *The Autobiography*, *Way of Perfection* and the *Interior Castle*. Furthermore, they are the foundation blocks for the spiritual life and necessary for the journey to God. In the early stages of the spiritual journey, the truth and self-knowledge are indispensable in all aspects of spiritual life. Teresa explains this as follows:

“Déjela andar por estas moradas, arriba y abajo y a los lados, pues Dios la dio tan gran dignidad. No se estruje en estar mucho tiempo en una pieza sola. ¡Oh que si es en el propio conocimiento! Que con cuan necesario es esto (miren que me entiendan), aun a las que tiene el Señor en la misma morada que él está, que jamás - por encumbrada que esté - le cumple otra cosa ni podrá aunque quiera; que humildad siempre labra como la abeja en la colmena la miel, que sin esto todo va perdido. Mas consideremos que la abeja no deja de salir a volar para traer flores; así el alma en el propio conocimiento, créame y vuele algunas veces a considerar la grandeza y majestad de su

¹⁵¹ The term 'humility' is used with frequency in the works of St. Teresa. It appears 332 times in all her writings, that is, 88 times in *El Libro de la Vida* (V); 20 times in *Las Foundations* (F); 68 times in *EL Camino de Valladolid* (CV); 61 times in *El Camino de Escorial* (CE); 38 times in *Las Moradas* (M); 6 times in *Las Relaciones* (R); 9 times in *Los Conceptos del amor a Dios* (CP); once in *Las Exclamaciones* (E); 24 times in *Las Cartas* (C); once in *Vejamen* (V); 3 times in *Los Memoriales y apuntes* (MA); 5 times in *La Respuesta a un desafío* (RD); (ASTIGARRAGA, A., A. BORRELL, *Concordancias de los escritos de santa Teresa de Jesús*, vol. I, Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2000, 1320-1324).

Dios. Aquí hallará su bajeza mejor que en sí misma, y más libre de las sabandijas adonde entran en las primeras piezas, que es el propio conocimiento; que aunque, como digo, es harta misericordia de Dios que se ejercite en esto, tanto es lo de más como lo de menos suelen decir. Y créanme, que con la virtud de Dios obraremos, muy mejor virtud que muy atadas a nuestra tierra” (1 M 2, 9).

We will discover that humility is the virtue that sifts through the many paradoxes of human existence in search for truth. It peels off the layers of vanity and self-deception to reveal us to our own real selves, as we really are. It does so not by comparing us to other people but by placing us before the throne of God. Only in the light of God’s truth and love can we see the whole truth about ourselves, without exaggeration. The truly humble person sees himself as he really is, since he sees himself as God sees him. Knowledge of the truth about us, however important, does not suffice. Humility goes one step further. It not only instills in us knowledge of the truth but also the ability and indeed the habit of living in the truth. This means thinking, speaking and acting according to the truth of who we are.

Teresa emphasizes self-knowledge as being essential for the arduous process of transformation. This is because it takes a large amount of effort, humility and courage to acknowledge one’s faults. This acknowledgement requires an understanding of the self, as it will be discussed later in this chapter, and it is this acknowledgment of faults that is the foundation of humility. It follows, therefore, that self-knowledge is the point of departure for humility; it makes it possible to come to terms with one’s ‘smallness’ relative to the ‘greatness’ of God, and to realize that one is ultimately reliant and dependant on God. It is axiomatic, then, that this realization leads to the achievement of humility through self-knowledge. The present analysis begins by describing and outlining a few facts of the historical, religious and social situation of the sixteenth Century Spain, which help to situate us in the thinking of Teresa and of the time. We will then tackle the idea of virtue in St. Teresa, which will shed some light on the virtue which concerns us here, namely the virtue humility as walking in truth, which is immediately followed by its companion, self-knowledge.

2.1. HISTORICAL SETTING AND THE QUESTION OF VIRTUES IN ST. TERESA

2.1.1. Profile of Spain in the XVI century

Before proceeding to the details of her virtue of humility, we will briefly in this section put into focus the religious and spiritual background of the sixteenth century in which St. Teresa

was born and brought up. They had a very decisive part to play in forming her character and virtues. We will see how these events in sixteenth century Spain and in particular, Ávila, contributed to further growth in her view of the virtue of humility. In order to ground ourselves sufficiently, we will further in this first part explore the question of virtue in the thinking and experience of Teresa. It is clear from her life and writings that being a saint does not mean one stops being human or cease to love family and friends. When we look at her life we discover that she was not a perfect woman and just like any other human person she had weaknesses and strengths. At the same time she demonstrates how ordinary life can be lived in an extraordinary way. Thus, we discover how she could lead a virtuous life while going through the very experiences of human life.

a) St. Teresa before the Inquisition

Orthodox Catholicism enforced by the harsh judgment of the Spanish Inquisition dominated life in sixteenth century Spain. As a Christian mystic, Teresa it reported to have had incredibly intense experiences of God. Her raptures and writings potentially placed her life in great danger. She was even more vulnerable due to her status as a descendent of Jewish converts to Catholicism. It is a time marked by suspicion¹⁵² especially for women who happened to be involved in writing like Teresa. Gillian T.W. Ahlgren summarizes this situation as follows:

“The evolution of Spanish orthodoxy had very different effects on women than it did on men. By placing all spiritual authority on the clergy, from whom women were barred, the Catholic Reformation denied women the power of spirituality. In fact, a clear enunciation of male and female roles figured prominently in sixteenth century religious debate. Though they would not describe their activities this way, most sixteenth century authors and ecclesiastical figures were engaged in the construction of the gender ideology”¹⁵³.

¹⁵² “Teresa... was a *conversa* and was often linked socially with other *conversos*; she was accused of being troublesome and unstable, a gadabout when she should be praying in her monastic cell; she led a sometimes unpopular reform movement; she was a woman, with no formal theological education, but she dared to teach mystical theology; she wrote about mysticism at a time when the Valdes Index proscribed such books; and she spoke about such problematic subjects as visions and religious experiences that manifested themselves physically” (AHLGREN T.W. GILLIAN, *Teresa of Avila and the politics of sanctity*, Cornell University Press, London 1996, 67).

¹⁵³ *Ib.*, 7.

Teresa suffered a big blow from the Index of 1559¹⁵⁴, which had been enacted by the Spanish Inquisition; she narrates her pain for being unable to lay hands on these books. But the Lord was quick to reassure her¹⁵⁵. J. Contreras argues that Teresa on different accounts had to present herself before the Inquisition as a writer to answer various issues as well to avoid being suspected:

“El control inquisitorial de espirituales a lo largo del XVI culmina en la constante sospecha de que el Santo Oficio hizo objeto a la Madre Teresa, tanto por sus múltiples relaciones con varios de los ambientes religiosos que se han ido respondiendo en las páginas precedentes, como por los testimonios de sus visiones y gracias especiales relatados por ella misma en su Vida...”¹⁵⁶.

Noteworthy is that, despite the afflictions befalling the women writers of her time, Teresa corresponds harmoniously with the *Magisterium* of the church; that she is an exceptional witness to the way of grace from sin and conversion to the mystical marriage; she affirms this through her experience of the reality of inner grace, justification, the indwelling of the Trinity¹⁵⁷. In 1575 for instance, Teresa had to appear before the Inquisition in Sevilla, having been denounced by one *beata*¹⁵⁸, a newly entrant, who had been expelled from the convent there. The inquisitors

¹⁵⁴ “Hubo una acción inquisitorial colectiva que le afectó personalmente de modo aparentemente negativo, pero que, a la larga, resultó enormemente positivo. Fue la publicación, en 1559, *el Índice de libros que se prohíben*, del inquisidor Fernando de Valdés. En el prefacio a la edición de Valladolid, ordena, prohíbe, exhorta y manda ‘a todas y cualesquier personas... que ninguno tenga ni lea libros contenidos en el dicho catálogo’. Y el edicto tema que ser publicado ‘principalmente en las, iglesias catedrales y en las otras iglesias y monasterios, en los pulpitos por los predicadores’” (DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Teresa en oración*, Editorial de Espiritualidad, Madrid 2004, 107).

¹⁵⁵ “Cuando se quitaron muchos libros de romance, que no se leyesen, yo sentí mucho, porque algunos me daba recreación leerlos y yo no podía ya, por dejarlos en latín; me dijo el Señor: No tengas pena, que Yo te daré libro vivo. Yo no podía entender por qué se me había dicho esto, porque aún no tenía visiones. Después, desde a bien pocos días, lo entendí muy bien, porque he tenido tanto en qué pensar y recogerme en lo que veía presente, y ha tenido tanto amor el Señor conmigo para enseñarme de muchas maneras, que muy poca o casi ninguna necesidad he tenido de libros; Su Majestad ha sido el libro verdadero adonde he visto las verdades ¡Bendito sea tal libro, que deja imprimido lo que se ha de leer y hacer, de manera que no se puede olvidar!” (V 26, 5).

¹⁵⁶ J. CONTRERAS, *Las coyunturas políticas e inquisitoriales de la etapa*, in: *Historia de la inquisición en España y América*, Vol. II, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos Centro de Estudios Inquisitoriales, Madrid 1984, 832.

¹⁵⁷ JESÚS CASTELLANO, *Espiritualidad Teresiana*, en: *Introducción a la lectura de Santa Teresa*, (Dir. ALBERTO BARRIENTOS), Editorial de Espiritualidad, Madrid 2002², 121.

¹⁵⁸ “Habiéndose quedado viuda joven, entró en un convento de monjas carmelitas en Andalucía [Sevilla], del que salió para fundar, por inspiración divina, un convento reformado del Carmen. Pudo realizar su idea, con los papeles en regla concedidos por Roma, en Alcalá de Henares el día 11 de septiembre de 1562, pocos días después de la fundación de *San José* en Ávila por santa Teresa, el 24 de agosto de 1562. La Santa intervino, con anuencia de la beata y muchas contradicciones de algunas monjas, para moderar las prácticas penitenciales introducidas en Alcalá en torno al 1567” (DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Teresa en oración*, o.c, 140-141).

entered into the convent where she had been residing to demand that she gives a full account, exonerating herself from the said accusations; luckily, enough this time she was acquitted of any wrong doing.

However, on other occasions she was less fortunate; one such instance was with the censors, who on examining her writings as if with a ‘magnifying glass’, left abundant evidence of the corrections they were looking forward to. The Inquisition questioned her on *the Book of Life*, her own autobiography, of which they were accusing her of indulging in such polemic issues as ‘mystical things’ and leaving behind some seemingly, elements of *alumbradismo*.

“Las ofensas de la inquisición, la escalda de ‘inicies de libros prohibidos, le vedaron auténticos remansos para su espíritu; pero el hecho, si no del todo, explica parcialmente el fenómeno de su misticismo tardo. El índice del inquisidor Valdés (1559) le robó la producción Librería en romance que había constituido su alimento espiritual”¹⁵⁹.

So here we take notice of the reigning hypersensitivity among the most orthodox theologians of the time on issues that touched church doctrine, which were already defined and given direction by the Council [of Trent], which were being misinterpreted in certain spiritual circles of the day. In this doctrinal scene, Teresa sets out writing by defining correctly her teaching¹⁶⁰. Teresa had to submit herself and appear on summons before the Inquisition in all cases in different places, and she did that demonstrating clarity of her vision and an exemplary humility, transparency and sincerity.

b) Glorification of God and humility of man in the Theology of the XVI century

We are in front of the Church Reformation, and during this time the concern of humility appears in three conditions or core beliefs: saving the transcendence of God’s grace and shooting down all of man’s pretensions, that salvation does not come from man; that man cannot be saved through his works and merits; and that man will never own this salvation as an acquired gift. To convince man that he is radically a sinner and that he is always inclined to sin so that he may

¹⁵⁹ TEÓFANES EGIDO, *Ambiente histórico, Introducción a la lectura de Santa Teresa*, (Dir. ALBERTO BARRIENTOS), Editorial de Espiritualidad, Madrid 2002², 71.

¹⁶⁰ *Ib.*, 185.

disengage completely of himself and of his own works. Jean-Marie Laurier believes that Teresa finds herself caught up in this milieu:

“En efecto, Teresa se encuentra con la preocupación por la glorificación de Dios y la humildad del hombre que inspiraba tanto la protesta de la Reforma como la síntesis católica elaborada en Trento. Ve la humildad, en un primer momento, como una disposición eficaz y una fuerza conquistadora. Esta dimensión de base se encuentra realzada por la comparación del ajedrez en el contexto de una iglesia transformada en fortaleza de defensa y ataque”¹⁶¹.

It is a concern that aims to communicate confidence and the certainty of faith in God that sin no longer counts because of the justification of man in Christ. Consequently, humility of that time is humility of hope, of passivity, of annihilation before the God who is ever transcendent, but outpouring his grace and who is always with an outward orientation towards the human person¹⁶². It excludes responsibility and involvement of men in their own salvation. It denies reality and fruitfulness of the grace of Christ in man as interior, habitual gift, because it could generate an attitude of possession, of complacency and self-satisfaction.

“No se ha profundizado hasta ahora un aspecto de la humildad teresiana que presente sin embargo un gran interés teológico y una gran actualidad. En el siglo de Teresa, durante su propia existencia (1515-1582), la protesta de los Reformadores (a partir de 1517) en su dimensión más profunda y religiosa, se hallaba animada por una preocupación por la glorificación de Dios y la humildad del hombre: *sola gratia, sola fides, sola scriptura! Soli Deo gloria*”¹⁶³.

¹⁶¹ JEAN-MARIE LAURIER, *Andar en humildad. Teresa de Jesús y la Teología de la justificación*, Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2011, 330.

¹⁶² “La capitalidad de *Cristo* en la vida del cristiano, el sentido santificador de su Humanidad; la santificación del cristiano por pura donación divina, sin los méritos propios de las obras. Y así otras doctrinas, como la *sola fides* luterana, el valor y significado de la Escritura, la invocación de la experiencia personal de Dios y la inviolabilidad de la conciencia individual, el talante místico, mucho más acusado en Teresa que en Lutero, etc. Pero en el fondo, la visión cristiana de Teresa de Jesús, en su conjunto, está muy alejada de la teología luterana. La Escritura la lee en el contexto de la tradición de la Iglesia, bajo la iluminación de los letrados, aunque acepta de mala gana que le prohíban leerla por ser ‘mujer e idiota’, como decían los teólogos de entonces” (DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Teresa en oración*, o.c, 132).

¹⁶³ *Ib.*, 10.

This therefore, shows that the Teresian search of true humility is inserted in this climate of divine emulation between the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic counter-reformation in the sixteenth century, and which has to be put in the perspective of the doctrine of justification¹⁶⁴. It could be asserted here based on this that, Teresa to some extent, was influenced by the mentality of the current theology.

In the last part of the commentary of the *Our Father* (C 38, 39, 40, 41, 42), in the *Way of Perfection*, Teresa includes what is for her, a vital message; that is, true humility unites itself together with love, such that it will not cease to radiate, which is a vigilant, but a peaceful tool to face fear and insecurity of life. It is a balanced and complex vision of humility, which strictly respects the guidelines of the Tridentine synthesis, as it is witnessed in corrections of the censors in the autographs of *The Way of Perfection*, but which also extends an irrefutable trust¹⁶⁵. Grace keeps man in a radical humility from self-sufficiency at the same time discarding any complacency. The Teresian humility emerges as updating and acceptance of the integral truth of man in a radical view of double attribution¹⁶⁶.

c) The question of the *honra*¹⁶⁷ in the Spain of the XVI century

The custom of the *honra* was deeply rooted in the Spanish society of the sixteenth century. Maximiliano H. García asserts that Teresa makes of it, a new approach that advocates equality for all in her reform. Henceforth true honor will be to live a life worthy of God's honor. God for Teresa is the real *honra*:

“El sentimiento de la honra es la gran fuerza que, descarada o subrepticamente, motiva en el fondo la vida individual y de la sociedad. Será el gran obstáculo a salvar por el que verdaderamente se compromete a ser consecuente sin concesiones a las exigencias de su fe. Para Teresa, adelantémoslo ya, el proceso de perfección va de la honra del mundo a la

¹⁶⁴ DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Teresa en oración*, o.c, 11.

¹⁶⁵ JEAN-MARIE LAURIER, *Andar en humildad*, o.c, 281.

¹⁶⁶ “... en nuestras obras dando a Dios lo que es suyo y a nosotras lo que es nuestro y procurando sacar en todo la verdad, (...) Dios es suma verdad y la humildad es andar en verdad, que lo es muy grande no tener cosa buena de nosotros, sino la miseria y ser nada ...” (6M 10, 6-7).

¹⁶⁷ Aclaremos conceptos. Honra no siempre conlleva significado peyorativo. Tiene acepción bivalente. Equivale, a veces, a honor, por ejemplo, la “gloria y honra”, de origen bíblico. Incluso lo pondrá en boca del Señor, en momentos solemnes: “como verdadera esposa, mi honra es ya tuya y la tuya mía” (6M 1, 4; 7, 3, 2). Pero las más de las veces designa el fenómeno ético social que ahora nos interesa, y que ella etiquetará frecuentemente como “negra honra” o “negros puntos de honra” (C 36, 6,7).

honra de Dios. Un cambio de gravitación, una transposición radical del centro de atención. Tenemos, pues, dos tipos de honra: la del mundo y la de Dios. Radicalmente opuestos y, por tanto, mutuamente excluyentes”¹⁶⁸.

Teresa did not have much to do with human values such as family titles, power and appearances. She had a firsthand knowledge of the suffering that her relatives had to undergo for being of Jewish ancestry, which consciously silences in her writings, and which was the price of the nobility of her grandfather (*after leading the sambenito in Toledo*), not only economical but of the desertion, having to emigrate to Ávila, where he would be able to restart his life. In her autobiography, (V20, 24 - 28), Teresa makes a strong criticism of three categories or three worldly values which are a hindrance for spiritual formation. They are: titles/honors, moneys and pleasures. Overcoming this triple tyranny is absolutely necessary to reach the freedom of spirit, which she calls *señorío del alma*:

“¡Qué señorío tiene un alma que el Señor llega aquí, que lo mire todo sin estar enredada en ello!”... “Fatígase del tiempo en que miró puntos de honra, y el engaño que traía de creer que era honra lo que el mundo llama honra; ve que es grandísima mentira, y que todos andamos en ella. Entiende que la verdadera honra no es mentirosa, sino verdadera, teniendo en algo lo que es algo, y lo que no es nada tenerlo en nonada, pues todo es nada y menos que nada lo que se acaba y no contenta a Dios” (V 20,25-26).

Teresa herself before entering religious life was with *honra*: “*honrosa*”, that is, she was not a slave. “Tan honrosa [herself] que no me parece tornara atrás por ninguna manera, habiéndolo dicho una vez” (V 3,7), she even feared losing this same *honra*: “Temía mucho [perder] la honra” (V 2,7). The *honra* which she feared losing and to which she refers here are issues that have to do with beauty and appeasement¹⁶⁹.

The other aspect of *honra*, and of which concerns us here is the *limpieza de sangre*; during that time there was fight for nobility or demonstration of being an ‘old Christian’ for those without Jewish ancestry, and many were willing to go as far as it took to pay to acquire an

¹⁶⁸ MAXIMILIANO HERRAIZ GARCÍA, *Solo Dios basta. Claves de espiritualidad teresiana*, Editorial de Espiritualidad, Madrid 2000⁵, 238.

¹⁶⁹ “Íbame al hilo de la gente. ¡Oh, de qué cosas me agraviaba, que yo tengo vergüenza ahora y no era de las que mucho miraban en estos puntos, mas erraba en el punto principal...!” (C 36, 4).

illustrious name. María del Puerto underlines that, the fact that Teresa abandoned her surname ‘*de Ahumada*’, was a demonstration of a revolutionary social rebellion. All must be equal in the new family. She wants that all to live in a genuine fraternity with interpersonal relationships in accordance with the teachings of Jesus¹⁷⁰.

Differences in society-class were reflected in the convents of the time. Teresa lived in the *monastery of the Incarnation*, where this was a reality. It was her resolve that, in the Teresian foundations, there shall henceforth be no nuns of class. In the book of the *Way of Perfection*, she focuses on a community life free of defects arising from this type of society, clinging to the code of honor and the hierarchy of classes. On it she founds for interior detachment, in yearning for freedom of spirit and the total surrender to God.

“Desasirse de todo, para darse del todo al todo...el demonio también inventa sus honras en los monasterios... ¡Oh, válgame Dios, hermanas, si entendiésemos qué cosa es honra y en qué está perder la honra! Ahora no hablo con vosotras..., sino conmigo, el tiempo que me precié de honra sin entender qué cosa era. Íbame al hilo de la gente” (C 36,4, 6).

She again asserts: “...deseo de ser más o puntito de honra...veo es el principal mal de los monasterios” (V 7,10). Teresa speaks of the *honra* of poverty, dignity of being human. Influenced by the deepest Gospel message, she changed the concepts of the time, thus redefining the true meaning of honor¹⁷¹. Teresa gives much importance to forgetfulness of the personal honor, which is like poison that gets into the corners of the soul. We must abandon pride for the love of one another and, consequently, the love of God. These historical-social aspects bring us to focus on humility as developed and lived by Teresa.

2.1.2. Virtues according to St. Teresa

Before engaging ourselves deeply and profoundly with Teresa’s virtue of humility according, it is appropriate to take a glimpse into the meaning of *virtue* itself in her. As a mystic, St. Teresa of Jesus had the theological and human virtues on a different level. It is clear from her

¹⁷⁰ MARÍA DEL PUERTO, *Humildad, verdad en camino*: Revista de Espiritualidad 70 (2011) 54.

¹⁷¹ “Parece también que dejamos la honra en ser religiosos o en haber ya comenzado a tener vida espiritual y a seguir perfección, y no nos han tocado en un punto de honra, cuando no se nos acuerda la hemos ya dado a Dios, y nos queremos tornar a alzar con ella y tomársela - como dicen - de las manos, después de haberle de nuestra voluntad, al parecer, hecho de ella señor. Así son todas las otras cosas” (V 11, 2).

life and writings, that being a saint does not mean one stops being human or ceases to love his family and friends. St. Teresa was not a perfect woman and just like most of us, she had weaknesses and strengths. At the same time she shows us how to lead an ordinary life in an extraordinary way; how she could lead a full virtuous life while experiencing good and bad times of her life.

a) The meaning of virtue in general

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good. It allows the person not only to perform good deeds, but also to give the best of himself or herself¹⁷². It is precisely a habit, a custom that is acquired through the repetition of similar acts¹⁷³. Here we realize that the virtues help us habitually to do what is good. They are the building blocks for Christian moral living.

Accordingly, the Church has developed a theology of the virtues, building on what the ancients discovered through natural law and what God revealed through divine inspiration. Catholic tradition recognizes four cardinal virtues that are also known as human, natural, or moral virtues. They are prudence (wisdom), justice, fortitude (courage), and temperance (self-control)¹⁷⁴. Moral virtues are gained through human efforts, and the natural purpose of the practice of these virtues is a good life. However, as Christians, the goal that we are striving for is not merely a good life here on earth, but rather eternal life in heaven. Therefore, God in His goodness has elevated the natural virtues by His grace¹⁷⁵. The natural virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) practiced in the power of God's grace help us to meet not only our natural good but our supernatural end that is, eternal bliss in heaven with God. As Pope Pius XI explains:

“The supernatural order... does not only in the least destroy the natural order, to which pertain the other rights mentioned, but elevates the natural and perfects it, each affording mutual aid to the other, and completing it in a manner proportioned to its respective

¹⁷² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, o.c., 1803.

¹⁷³ AURELIO FERNÁNDEZ, *Diccionario de Teología moral*: Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2004, 1436.

¹⁷⁴ The word “cardinal” derives from the Latin *cardo* and means “hinge.” Thus, the cardinal virtues are the virtues upon which the other moral virtues hinge. The four cardinal virtues are not the only natural virtues but rather the primary virtues under which all the others are grouped and classified. Some examples of other moral virtues include patience, humility, and gentleness.

¹⁷⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, o.c., 1810.

nature and dignity. The reason is because both come from God, who cannot contradict Himself”¹⁷⁶.

b) Understanding of virtues in the life of Teresa

For her case, St. Teresa never preoccupies herself with defining virtue, as theologians would do. F. Malax argues:

“Santa Teresa de Jesús nunca se puso a decirnos, con los ‘letrados’, que la virtud es ‘un habito operativo bueno’ y que algunas tienen un origen bíblico, pero que su clasificación teológica posterior se inspira en la filosofía griega”¹⁷⁷.

For her, all that is good, which is labored and which is done with the aim of loving God; that is for her, virtue¹⁷⁸. She will take a step forward to enumerate these good things when she invokes memories of her youth, of the virtuous people she encountered and interacted with; of her relatives¹⁷⁹, formators and many of her sisters with whom she managed to share life. Later she will talk about her sicknesses and how during this time of uncertainty she was able to develop new virtues, which she enumerates as: frequent confession and prayer, patience, of not talking ill of anyone and how she learned the love of God. Of these virtues, she asserts:

“Paréceme era toda mi ansia de sanar por estar a solas en oración como venía mostrada, porque en la enfermería no había aparejo. Confesábame muy a menudo. Trataba mucho de Dios, de manera que edificaba a todas, y se espantaban de la paciencia que el Señor me daba; porque, a no venir de mano de Su Majestad, parecía imposible poder sufrir tanto mal con tanto contento. Gran cosa fue haberme hecho la merced en la oración que me había hecho, que ésta me hacía entender qué cosa era amarle; porque de aquel poco tiempo vi nuevas en mí estas virtudes, aunque no fuertes...” (V 6, 2-3).

¹⁷⁶ POPE PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter on Christian Education *Divini Illius Magistri* (December 31, 1929), no. 28.

¹⁷⁷ F. MALAX, *Virtudes*, in: *Doctrina e Historia*, (Director TOMAS ÁLVAREZ), Monte Carmelo, Burgos, 2002, 658.

¹⁷⁸ *Ib.*

¹⁷⁹ For instance, she eulogises her mother of her virtuous life: “mi madre también tenía muchas virtudes y pasó la vida con grandes enfermedades. Grandísima honestidad. Con ser de harta hermosura, jamás se entendió que diese ocasión a que ella hacía caso de ella, porque con morir de treinta y tres años...” (V 1, 2).

The measure of Christian perfection is the exercise of virtues, synthesized in the love of God and neighbor. She says:

“Entendamos hijas mías que la perfección verdadera es amor de Dios y del prójimo, y mientras con más perfección guardaremos estos dos mandamientos seremos más perfectas” (1M 2,17).

She indulges in the desire to serve God¹⁸⁰, of silence and solitude (V13, 7), about forgiveness (C 36, 12), of understanding and of values¹⁸¹; penitence, giving of alms and charity. Varghese C. Joseph feels that these virtues are well engraved in her way of life:

“Being a mystical teacher of way of perfection, St. Teresa possessed a firm disposition to do good and was more a lover of virtues than rigorousness. Whatever she taught, she practiced in her life...Without virtues and prayer can be a subjective illusion, converting the friendship with God as a false dialogue without content. On the other hand, prayer arouses, sustains and grows virtues. It is the beginning of all virtues. This is the fundamental Teresian principle born from her experience”¹⁸².

It is worth noting that, although Teresa enumerates all these virtues, though few among many others which have not been outlined here, she underscores the importance or the supremacy of some of them. For instance, she exalts some: “Humildad y mortificación y desasimiento; amor y temor de Dios” (C 17,4); “gran obediencia”; “santa pobreza”; “la verdadera humildad” (C 17,7). These appear for her to assume mayor significance as they are embodied in the rest of the Christian virtues. Teresa therefore with her teaching and life experience, exalts the value of human and social virtues as a sign and concrete application of fraternal charity and spiritual growth.

¹⁸⁰ “Siempre en estos trabajos grandes me enviaba el Señor, como me lo mostró, una persona de su parte que me diese la mano, como me lo había mostrado en esta visión, sin ir asida a nada más de a contentar al Señor; que ha sido para sustentar esa poquita de virtud que yo tenía en deseáros servir. ¡Seáis bendito por siempre!” (V 39, 19).

¹⁸¹ “Había en esta ciudad de Burgos una santa viuda, llamada Catalina de Tolosa, natural de Vizcaya, que en decir sus virtudes me pudiera alargar mucho, así de penitencia como de oración, de grandes limosnas y caridad, de muy buen entendimiento y valor...” (F 31, 8).

¹⁸² VARGHESE CHERIYAKADAVIL JOSEPH, *The theological and human virtues of St. Teresa of Jesus in her letters*, Facultat de Teologia de Catalunya, Barcelona 2011, 15-16.

c) On the absence of these virtues

Teresa, who ordinarily maintains a positive concept of people does not support what she regards to as ‘sham of life’¹⁸³. She is convinced of the fact that society is not directed or governed by a code of truth¹⁸⁴. She is convinced of the enormous value of the lifestyle governing social life: for instance, honors, money, pleasures¹⁸⁵. Josef Pierper for instance supports this idea:

“La virtud no es la ‘honradez’ y ‘corrección’ de un hacer u omitir aislado. Virtud más bien significa que el hombre es verdadero, tanto en el sentido natural como en el sobrenatural. Incluso, dentro de la misma conciencia universal cristiana, hay dos posibilidades peligrosas de confundir el concepto de virtud: primero, la moralista, que aísla la acción, la ‘realización’, la ‘práctica’ y las independiza frente a la existencia vital del hombre. Segundo, la supenaturalista, que desvaloriza el ámbito de la vida bien llevada, de lo vital y de la honradez y decencia natural. Virtud, en términos completamente generales, es la elevación del ser en la persona humana. La virtud es, como dice Santo Tomás, *ultimum potentiae*, lo máximo a que puede aspirar el hombre, o sea, la realización de las posibilidades humanas en el aspecto natural y sobrenatural. El hombre virtuoso es tal que realiza el bien obedeciendo a sus inclinaciones más íntimas”¹⁸⁶.

She herself feels inevitably wrapped in the same network; she tells it to the Lord: “Con haberme Vos dado natural de aborrecer la mentira, yo misma me hice tratar en muchas cosas mentiras” (V 40, 4). Hence, this brings us to the importance which she attaches to two sets of behavior: discerning the values of life, and know the truth of oneself. This is what has been referred to as ‘*Socratic Teresa*’¹⁸⁷, which brings her to the distinction of human behavior in two

¹⁸³ “¡Oh, qué es un alma que se ve aquí, haber de tornar a tratar con todos, a mirar y ver esta farsa de esta vida tan mal concertada, a gastar el tiempo en cumplir con el cuerpo, durmiendo y comiendo! Todo la cansa, no sabe cómo huir, vese encadenada y presa” (V 21, 6).

¹⁸⁴ “Está la vida [la sociedad] toda llena de engaños y dobleces”... “No hay ya quien viva, viendo el gran engaño en que andamos”. (V 21, 1, 4).

¹⁸⁵ “Lo que el mundo llama honra ve [ella] que es grandísima mentira y que todos andamos en ella” (V 20, 26). “Cuando pensáis que tenéis una voluntad ganada, según lo que os muestra, venís a entender que es todo mentira. No hay ya quien viva en tanto tráfigo, en especial si hay algún poco de interés” (V 21,1).

¹⁸⁶ JOSEF PIERPER, *Las virtudes fundamentales*, Ediciones RIALP, Madrid 1980, 15.

¹⁸⁷ “Pero ya entonces esa especie de ‘socratismo’ añadía a la clásica consigna del ‘conócete a ti mismo’, una nota especial, típicamente cristina: conócete a ti, pero a la luz de Dios, que te conoce más y mejor que tú mismo y te ama...Teresa no es discípula de Sócrates. Pero avanza en esa misma dirección. Sólo que lo hace desde su

radically opposing views: ‘to walk in truth’ and ‘to walk in lies’. It would be obviously impossible to know the truth of one’s own-values and anti-values, except in the light of God. She proposes this method as a matter of urgency to the beginner who is entering into the first dwellings places (1 M1, 2), and she certainly insists on the same for those already in the last dwelling places (7 M 6, 10). Therefore, she is in order when she proposes this famous phrase:

“Una vez estaba yo considerando por qué razón era nuestro Señor tan amigo de esta virtud de la humildad, y púsoseme delante... esto: que es porque Dios es suma verdad, y la humildad es andar en verdad, que lo es muy grande no tener cosa buena de nosotros... y quien esto no entiende anda en mentira. Quien más lo entiende agrada más a la suma Verdad, porque anda en ella” (6M, 10,7).

d) Feigned virtues

This is a theme reflected and experienced by Teresa in her life. The overlapping pride, deep desire for prominence, vainglory and other reasons, on more than one occasion can mistakenly deceive the person who possesses virtues. Teresa will repeat insistently that every virtue must be tested ‘with its opposite’ (V 31, 19) and endorsed by the presence of great virtues. In some of them there appears “...señales que parece los ciegos las ven”(C 40, 1-5). Signs that eventually will focus on trying to deny our selfishness and to do the will of God, without “que queramos nosotras que se haga nuestra voluntad sino la suya” (3M 2, 6).

She will invoke some examples of virtues that on the first occasion are shattered patience, poverty of spirit, love of neighbor, humility; but will end up adding that all of them are virtues as well: “...y todas las virtudes” (C 38,8- 9;). She says:

“...tener hábito de religión” (M 3, 2,6), o “...guardarse de ofender al Señor” puede parecer que todo está hecho. “¡Oh!, que quedan unos gusanos que no se dan a entender hasta que... nos han roído las virtudes con un amor propio, una propia estimación, un juzgar los prójimos, aunque sea en pocas cosas, una falta de caridad con ellos, no los queriendo como a nosotros mismos” (5M 3,6).

experiencia interior, específicamente cristiana” (TOMAS ÁLVAREZ, *Comentarios al “castillo interior” de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2011, 266, 33).

As regards to this, F. Malax argues:

“Este panorama se vuelve aún más lúgubre, al estar las virtudes íntimamente unidas entre sí. Y así, entre un follaje aparente de virtudes, ‘un punto de hora’, un egoísmo escondido o camuflado, falsifica todas las demás (V 31,20). Para Teresa es un principio experiencial muy preocupante: ‘Si no quitan esta oruga, que ya que a todo el árbol no dañe, porque algunas otras virtudes quedarán, mas todas carcomidas’ (V 31,21). ‘Faltar algo en una virtud basta a adormecerlas todas’ (V 36,16)”¹⁸⁸.

Teresa does not want the practice of virtue to have the colors of dejection and desperation; rather an appealing, cheerful and evangelically scented face, because they are gifts from God to open hearts, which would draw others:

“Procurad ser afables y entender de manera con todas las personas que os trataren, que amen vuestra conversación y deseen vuestra manera de vivir y tratar, y no se atemoricen y amedrenten de la virtud” (C 41, 7).

The presence of virtues is the object of God’s joy and happiness for those who practice them since they are God’s delight: “...a deleitar muchas veces a esta huerta y a holgarse entre estas virtudes”. (V 11, 6.11).

e) Early development of virtue in St. Teresa

When we read Teresa’s early virtuous¹⁸⁹ ambitions in her tender age, we discover her aspirations for the martyr’s crown¹⁹⁰; she regarded martyrdom as the gateway to heaven¹⁹¹.

¹⁸⁸ F. MALAX, *Virtudes en: Diccionario de Santa Teresa*, (Dir. TOMAS ÁLVAREZ) Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2001, 660.

¹⁸⁹ “El tener padres virtuosos y temerosos de Dios me bastara, si yo no fuera tan ruin, con lo que el Señor me favorecía, para ser buena. Era mi padre aficionado a leer buenos libros y así los tenía de romance para que leyesen sus hijos. Esto, con el cuidado que mi madre tenía de hacernos rezar y ponernos en ser devotos de nuestra Señora y de algunos santos, comenzó a despertarme de edad, a mi parecer, de seis o siete años. Ayudábame no ver en mis padres favor sino para la virtud. Tenían muchas” (V 1, 1).

¹⁹⁰ “Como veía los martirios que por Dios las santas pasaban, parecíame compraban muy barato el ir a gozar de Dios y deseaba yo mucho morir así, no por amor que yo entendiese tenerle, sino por gozar tan en breve de los grandes bienes que leía haber en el cielo, y juntábame con este mi hermano a tratar qué medio habría para esto” (V 1, 4).

¹⁹¹ “A ella le parece que los cristianos compraban muy barato el ir a gozar de Dios cuando tenía la suerte de que les cortaran la cabeza. La niña vislumbra que un tajo fulminante-con la brevedad, el dolor ni se nota es más rentable que

Teresa learnt about martyrdom from books, which played a decisive role in her early development. Throughout her childhood, she and her brother Rodrigo enjoyed reading about the lives of the saints (V 1, 4), becoming so deeply inspired by them that, even though she was still a child, Teresa already felt a strong desire to die and go to heaven in order to enjoy more quickly the wonderful things she had read could be found there. Jean-Marie Laurier says that this is a gift instilled in her by God Himself, that God had it already prepared for her that she would be born of a virtuous family¹⁹².

In her late teenage, while at the home she read his many spiritual books. One of them unexpectedly touched her soul: it was *The Letters of St. Jerome*¹⁹³. St. Jerome lived from 342 to 419 CE, and was known for translating the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into Latin:

“St. Jerome’s letters or epistles, both by the great variety of their subjects and by their qualities of style, form the most interesting portion of his literary output. Whether he is discussing problems of scholarship, or reasoning on cases of conscience, comforting the afflicted, scourging the vices and corruptions of the time, exhorting to the ascetic life and renunciation of the world, or breaking a lance with his theological opponents, he gives a vivid picture not only of his own mind, but of the age and its peculiar characteristics”¹⁹⁴.

This book motivated Teresa to take a decision that she later said she had been trying to avoid, namely, to leave the world and enter a monastery of Carmelite nuns. As she explains:

“Habíanme dado, con unas calenturas, unos grandes desmayos, que siempre tenía bien poca salud. Diome la vida haber quedado ya amiga de buenos libros. Leía en las Epístolas de San Jerónimo, que me animaban de suerte que me determiné a decirlo a mi padre, que casi era como a tomar el hábito, porque era tan honrosa que me parece no tornara atrás por ninguna manera, habiéndolo dicho una vez” (V 3,7).

perderla poco a poco en los avatares de la vida. No estaba mal pensado. Con esta convicción, bien arraigada, manipula a Rodrigo” (PILAR ALASTRUÉ, *Una mujer, Tresa de Jesús*, Sígueme, Salamanca 1981, 25).

¹⁹² JEAN-MARIE LAURIER, *Andar en humildad*, c, 180-181.

¹⁹³ “El ultimo acontecimiento deriva ya hacia lo interior. En teresa se abre paso la vocación religiosa, haciendo frente de un libro de recia urdimbre: las cartas de San Jerónimo” (TOMAS ÁLVAREZ, *Estudios teresianos. Biografía e historia*, (Vol. I), Monte Carmelo, Burgos 1995, 27).

¹⁹⁴ Saint Jerome: http://www.thefullwiki.org/Saint_Jerome#Letters.

Teresa entered the Carmelite monastery of the Incarnation¹⁹⁵ in Ávila in 1535 at age twenty. On this regard, Kavanaugh writes on the sort of life that was in this monastery that, “Recent studies have shown that at the time of Teresa’s entry, the Incarnation numbered among eleven Carmelite Monasteries for nuns in Spain. Its canonical status lay midway between that of the *sanctimoniales*, those with obligation to choir office and enclosure, and that of the *beaterios*, where the life resembled tertiary life”¹⁹⁶. In 1537, two years later, after her profession as a nun that same year, she fell very ill. In 1539, she nearly died as a result of an illness and, as a matter of fact, was paralyzed for three years, until 1542.

The consequences of this illness plagued Teresa throughout her life and contributed significantly to her ill health. After the doctors admitted that they could find no cure for Teresa’s illness, her worried father decided to bring her back to Ávila, where she remained an invalid and paralytic for three years. During this time, she stayed at her uncle’s home; once again, she received from him another book to read: *The Third Spiritual Alphabet*, a book written by a Franciscan Friar, Francisco de Osuna (1492–1540 CE). According to Kavanaugh, it was from this book that she learned for the first time about interior prayer, especially the prayer of recollection¹⁹⁷.

Daniel de Pablo Maroto, however, argues that Teresa would nonetheless be critical of the leading *Recogimiento* of Osuna, for the idea that recollection demanded that one be denuded of everything sensual without exception, including the humanity of Christ¹⁹⁸. Teresa’s prayers were centered on the humanity of Christ and that Osuna’s comment was thus contradictory to Teresa’s understanding of recollection.

The following books¹⁹⁹ also had a significant influence on the development of Teresa’s virtuous life: Alonso de Madrid’s *Arte de Servir A Dios* (*Art of Serving God*) with its emphasis

¹⁹⁵ “Los que hoy contemplan el espléndido convento de *La Encarnación* de Ávila, habitado por monjas carmelitas descalzas, no sospechan sus humildes orígenes. Fue primero una casa habitada por un grupo de mujeres devotas, ‘beatas’, que, con el tiempo, se transformó en un monasterio de ‘monjas’, como solía acontecer con frecuencia en España y en Europa. Fue fundada en 1479 por Doña Elvira González de Medina, mujer de no claros orígenes y vida, que bien podría ser la tatarabuela de santa Teresa por vía paterna” (DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c., 129).

¹⁹⁶ KIERAN KAVANAUGH, O. Rodriguez, *Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. I, ICS Publications, Washington D.C 1987, 18.

¹⁹⁷ *Ib.*, 18-19.

¹⁹⁸ DANIEL DE PABLO MAROTO, *Lecturas y maestros de santa Teresa*, o.c., 246.

¹⁹⁹ Most of all these sources with which Teresa would have had a direct or indirect contact, which form part of her influence in her thought are already discussed in the previous chapter. Here I will touch on them briefly as a recapitulation.

on the humanity of Christ and on mental prayer; and Bernardino de Laredo's *Subida del Monte Sion (Ascent of Mount Zion)*, which describes the union of the soul with God and which caught her attention for its teaching on the state of *no pensar en nada* ('not thinking of anything') during prayer. Another book that had a significant impact on Teresa and her spirituality was Augustine's *Confessions*²⁰⁰.

With respect to the state of her spiritual life, it is worth noting that although Teresa did experience glimpses of the higher state of prayer during her first nineteen years as a religious from 1535 to 1554, at the same time she seems to have been neither extraordinarily gifted, nor extraordinarily devoted in regard to prayer. In fact, Teresa even gave up prayer for two years out of humility. Teresa felt that she was [lax and tepid], when it came to prayer at this stage of her life. It was only from 1554 onwards, after she had an intense conversion experience while praying before a graphic image of the wounded Christ, that Teresa started to develop rapidly in the life of prayer²⁰¹.

Conclusion

As a conclusion to this section we can say that there were many human virtues in St. Teresa. Teresian pedagogy itself calls attention to human dignity, especially finding the presence of God in each person. She practiced and asks that others practice the golden rule taught by Jesus: "In everything do to others as you would have them to do to you" (Mt. 7, 12). She counsels her sisters in the reform to focus on a community life free of defects arising from a society bent on class; as we have seen above, differences in society-class were reflected in the convents of the time, clinging to the code of honor and the hierarchy of classes; she in this case roots for equality of everyone. On it, she founds for interior detachment, in yearning for freedom of spirit and the total surrender to God.

Teresian virtues and psychology are determined by the religious and social situation of Ávila, where she was born and raised. In this aspect, the social and religious conditions in which she lived can affect the profoundly. Therefore it is important to underline that the historical environment played a major role in St. Teresa in such a way that while history presents its positive and negative faces, constructive and destructive elements, a person conscious of his call

²⁰⁰ KIERAN KAVANAUGH, O. Rodriguez, *Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, o.c., 20.

²⁰¹ *Ib.*, 20.

to Christian growth seeks to learn from all of the experiences which history provides. Teresa learned how to be humble and transparent faced with the frequent suspicions and summons on part of the Inquisition of the time. The question of honra threatened her reform, but from it she roots for equality and an honor based only on virtuous life. According to her, God honors us as long as we lead lives conforming to His will. She also happens to have been born and raised in a virtuous family as well as living in strong catholic culture. For her all the occurrences of this century are contributors to the model and teacher that Teresa came to be.

2.2. THE TERESIAN PEDAGOGY ON HUMILITY AS WALKING IN TRUTH AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

In this part we will underscore the Teresian double meaning of humility: as walking in the truth and as self-knowledge. We will put into perspective the value walking in the truth from the Christian horizon which is ‘a humbling of oneself’, which is a voluntary self emptying from one’s dignity of knowing the truth of our own selves as well as God as the supreme truth. We will observe that this Teresian overlook on is humility is dynamic; that it is no longer defined only as the consciousness of sin, but also a full acceptance of the inner truth of the human person and culminates in the constant attribution of every gift to God and all fragility to man.

The other major area of understanding the virtue of humility in Teresa, which runs parallel to the truth, is self-knowledge. We will discover that it is the virtue which is well understood as the truth, but in this case the truth applied to knowledge of who we are, our relationships with God and with the others; the truth that guide us. Self-knowledge interests us here, in that; it discovers the limitation and relativity of the human person in all the aspects of his being or his acting.

2.2.1. Humility as *walking in the truth*

2.2.1.1. The double faces of the truth

The definition of the Teresian dimension of humility, says F. Malax, is a result of a ‘mystical grace’²⁰². Teresa embarks on recounting it in her own life²⁰³, and later retakes the same

²⁰² F. MALAX, *Humildad*: in *Diccionario de Santa Teresa*, (Dir. TOMAS ÁLVAREZ) Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2001, 346.

²⁰³ “Quedóme una verdad de esta divina Verdad que se me representó..., porque da noticia de Su majestad y poder de una manera que no se puede decir... Quedóme muy gran gana de no hablar sino cosas muy verdaderas... No vi nada,

terminology in her writings on the *Interior Castle*²⁰⁴ by mitigating it with mystical colors, where by two ‘truths’ emerge, that is, *fontal truth*, that is, truth as God and the *creaturely truth*, knowing the truth of the reality which we are as creatures²⁰⁵. In both accounts, the truth about God and our own truth appear. Walking in both of these two is therefore humility. F. Malax maintains that the concept of walking in truth is a reality that Teresa will go ahead to expound with a logical surety:

“Estudiemos siempre mucho de andar en esta verdad... delante de Dios y de las gentes de cuantas maneras pudiéremos... en nuestras obras dando a Dios lo que es suyo y a nosotros lo que es nuestro, y procurando sacar en todo la verdad” (6M 10,6).

From this standpoint, ‘walking in truth’, is first and foremost a moral question which is fueled by a specific religious conception, nevertheless it’s an ontological problem, an aspect that defines the human person, and there, something in which his transcendent vocation, of a constitutive reference a *thou* which sinks his roots, as its beginning and end²⁰⁶. Since the human being is created in the image and likeness of God, and God being the supreme truth, the human person, will be the image of God by living in the truth, ‘walking in truth’; that is, accomplishing his expectations before God, which is doing God’s will.

“Sin alegrías superficiales, inconscientes, que se tornan pronto agrios y amargos sabores, pero con granítica fe en la posibilidad real de ir haciendo la verdad que se es. Al tratar de desatar el último nudo que atenaza la libertad real y, por eso, realmente posible de vivir, de hacer, el de la ‘imagen’ incontaminada del ‘yo’, aconseja con encarecimiento y fineza ‘no disculparse’ cuando se es culpado injustamente”²⁰⁷.

mas entendí el gran bien que hay en no hacer caso de cosa que no sea para llegarnos más a Dios, y así entendí qué cosa es andar un alma en verdad delante de la misma Verdad. Esto que entendí es darme el Señor a entender que es la misma Verdad” (V 40, 3).

²⁰⁴ “Una vez estaba yo considerando por qué razón era nuestro Señor tan amigo de esta virtud de la humildad y púsoseme delante... esto: que es porque Dios es suma Verdad y la humildad es andar en verdad” (6M, 10,7).

²⁰⁵ F. MALAX, *Humildad*: in *Diccionario de Santa Teresa*, o.c., 346.

²⁰⁶ MAXIMILIANO HERRAIZ. GARCÍA, *A zaga de tu huella. Estudios teresianos y sanjuanistas*, Editorial Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2004, 252.

²⁰⁷ *Ib.*, 255.

In the sixth dwelling places, Teresa considers both the trials and the favors experienced by the soul. These particular passages tacked here ground humility within the “soil of Teresa’s understanding of herself as a human person”²⁰⁸. We receive our being from God, thus we are finite; hence fragile and contingent. This is our truth; that God is supreme truth. God’s truth is such that He desires to communicate with us, as Teresa demonstrates the castle; that we determine to do the will of God in everything. God gives knowledge of how to do this. Acceptance of God and God’s gift of divine intimacy is important to doing God’s will. In this, we are free from deception.

2.2.1.2. God as the supreme Truth

Understanding this same truth as God or the supreme truth was one of the greatest gifts that Teresa received from God, in her spiritual union/marriage. Teresa in her autobiography outlines:

“Quedóme una verdad de esta divina Verdad que se me representó..., porque da noticia de Su majestad y poder de una manera que no se puede decir... Quedóme muy gran gana de no hablar sino cosas muy verdaderas... No vi nada, mas entendí el gran bien que hay en no hacer caso de cosa que no sea para llegarnos más a Dios, y así entendí qué cosa es andar un alma en verdad delante de la misma Verdad. Esto que entendí es darme el Señor a entender que es la misma Verdad...Entendí grandísimas verdades sobre esta Verdad, más que si muchos letrados me lo hubieran enseñado. Paréceme que en ninguna manera me pudieran imprimir así, ni tan claramente se me diera a entender la vanidad de este mundo. Esta verdad que digo se me dio a entender, es en sí misma verdad, y es sin principio ni fin, y todas las demás verdades dependen de esta verdad...” (V 40, 3-4).

This ‘vision’ is like the culmination of all the progressive unveiling of God; or at least for Teresa it will be seen as the summit in her ascent to the knowledge of God²⁰⁹. God is truth:

²⁰⁸ VILMA SEELAUS, *Teresa revision humility: A matter of justice*, in VV. AA., *The Land of Carmel, Essays in honor of J. Smet*, Institutum Carmelitanum, Rome 1991, 337.

²⁰⁹ MAXIMILIANO HERRAIZ GARCÍA, *Solo Dios basta. Claves de espiritualidad teresiana*, Editorial de Espiritualidad, Madrid, 2000⁵, 216.

“Se le descubre cómo en Dios se ven todas las cosas y las tiene todas en sí mismo... y muy claro dado a entender que Él solo es verdad..., verdad que no puede faltar” (6M, 10, 2,5).

These quotations we have seen above translate into a vital, existential and a dynamic dimension; that is, the human person sees himself/herself obliged to ‘walk in the truth’, to ‘draw all from the truth’²¹⁰. It is the channel that the human person is offered to remake his being. Humility is the human will’s self-sacrifice to the will of God, for Teresa; to the supreme truth. God is the Truth for her, the source and sustaining assurance for her being. Humility provides us with the certainty we require by submitting or consenting entirely and unreluctantly to what God presents. Indeed, it is by this exercise of humility that we know what is certain, that we recognize our inability to dissent from the truth.

2.2.1.3. God is humble

Having explored above the fact of God being the supreme truth, in continuation on the same line, we will realize that humility is an exemplary; that God is primarily humble. Up to this point, He has brought Teresa the experience of prayer²¹¹. That God is at the same time humble and loving, He is the one who goes out in search/encounter with the human person. She asserts:

“Aquí no hay que argüir, sino que conocer lo que somos con llaneza, y con simpleza representarnos delante de Dios, que quiere se haga el alma boba, como a la verdad lo es delante de su presencia, pues Su Majestad se humilla tanto que la sufre cabe sí siendo nosotros lo que somos...El gran emperador, Majestad, Señor, Rey... En todo se puede tratar y hablar con Vos, como quisiéramos, perdido el primer espanto y temor de ver Vuestra Majestad” (V 15, 8; 37, 6).

While she proceeds with her teaching on the Our Father, Teresa counsels: “Representad al mismo Señor junto con Vos y mirad con qué amor y humildad os está enseñando... [And of the humility of Jesus]... la humildad del buen Jesús” (C 26, 1; 42, 6).

²¹⁰ Ib., 217.

²¹¹ F. MALAX, *Humildad*, o.c, 349.

Gonzalez Buelta says that we sometimes entertain the thoughts that God is a distant God, who keeps away from us; but He is totally the contrary, that is, we exist and act within the abyss of His humble nearness²¹². Karl Rahner argues on the same humble presence of the divinity in the history; that God is ever present in the life of the human person:

“Pensamos que no está presente, porque desde que le empezamos a buscar no ha habido un solo momento en nuestra vida en que no le poseamos ya, en la suave dulzura de su amor inefable. Está presente como la clara luz que, difundida por todas partes, se oculta al hacer resplandecer todas las otras cosas como el humilde silencio de su ser”²¹³.

The way in which God relates with our limitations and sins, is the way through which He reveals to us His humility as well. God does not destroy the sinner, but assumes our limitations, not from up, but from below, from those abysses where we have fallen²¹⁴. Therefore, the basic problem here is the rupture/breakdown of relationship. God comes down at the human level always to reinitiate the communion that we have broken. Sr. Elia of Jesus believes that this is only possible through the incarnation:

“This humility of God, His descent into creature-hood, is possible only to the Son; not to human beings. The humility of Christ, shining before us in the mystery of the incarnation, is the veil under which God hides His love, so that we can see, feel and touch it”²¹⁵.

Thus the God of Teresa is not a distant creator who only utters the word, but one who is near, through His silence, in which we are able to utter our own word as well; formulate our questions and express our pain or our contentment. To grasp God as humble, then a learning process in the actual following of Jesus is necessary. Maximiliano Herraiz argues:

“Por aquí también se ilumina la intuición básica: la humildad es radicalmente la confesión más vibrante de Dios. Lo demás son consecuencias que se desprenden de ello con facilidad y que lo explicitan y ponen de manifiesto. Todo esto se confirma con una

²¹² BENJAMÍN GONZALEZ BUELTA, *La humildad de Dios*, Sal Terrae, Santander 2012, 71.

²¹³ KARL RAHNER, *La gracia como libertad*, Herder, Barcelona 1972, 36.

²¹⁴ BENJAMÍN GONZÁLEZ BUELTA, *La humildad de Dios*, o.c, 72.

²¹⁵ SR. ELIA OF JESUS, *Humility as a road to contemplative prayer*, Mount Carmel 31(1983) 145.

lectura atenta del diagnóstico que hace Teresa de la ‘humildad falsa’ y de la ‘humildad verdadera’²¹⁶.

This will demand an ever-deepening dedication to the person of Christ. Captured by him, with an intuition born of a great love for Him, Teresa here learns what humility is. This knowledge is a fruit of her love for Jesus. It is in this context that we have to understand Teresa’s conception of walking in the truth. Having explored the two dimensions of truth applicable in God, that includes God as the Supreme truth, His humility that the person ought to seek to know, below we will look at the means by which the person zealous for God participates in the Supreme truth.

2.2.1.4. The human being participates in the supreme Truth

Balmes says that truth is the reality of things. When we know them just as they are in themselves, then we reach truth²¹⁷. That involves knowing who we are as creatures, reliant on God. Josef Pieper argues that for the human being it involves transcendence, towards the Other (God), a process of realization:

“Una de las cosas en que el hombre, por instinto natural, procura hallar el logro de sí mismo es la tendencia a sobresalir, el demostrar superioridad, categoría y preeminencia. La virtud de la templanza, en cuanto aplicada a ese instinto para someterlo a los dictados de la razón, se llama humildad. Esta consiste en que el hombre se tenga por lo que realmente es”²¹⁸.

One of the senses of the truth, the *ontological one* includes, among several dimensions of true things, the original and teleological sense, something is true if it is good and if it fulfills its inner goal (adaptation between the thing and an imminent or transcendent measure).

Our point here is that *humility of the human being is necessary to know and live the truth*: as a previous and necessary condition to know truth, as a necessary condition during knowledge of truth and, finally, as a condition to maintain oneself in it and to proclaim it to others. As a

²¹⁶ MAXIMILIANO HERRAIZ. GARCÍA, *Solo Dios basta. Claves de espiritualidad teresiana*, o.c, 263.

²¹⁷ JAIME BALMES, *El criterio*, BAC, Madrid 1974, cap. I, 1.

²¹⁸ JOSEF PIERPER, *Las virtudes fundamentales*, o.c, 276.

previous condition, humility enables the recognition of our own limitations (in being and knowledge), respect for truth. While knowing the truth, it also entails a readiness to accept that the same truth may make us realists. For Teresa this humility is a radical turning point that brings us face to face with the truth. She writes:

“Una vez estaba yo considerando por qué razón era nuestro Señor tan amigo de esta virtud de la humildad, y púsoseme delante –a mi parecer sin considerarlo, sino de presto– esto: que es porque Dios es suma verdad, y la humildad es andar en verdad, que lo es muy grande no tener cosa buena de nosotros, sino la miseria y ser nada; y quien esto no entiende, anda en mentira. A quien más lo entiende agrada más a la suma Verdad, porque anda en ella. Plega a Dios, hermanas, nos haga merced de no salir jamás de este propio conocimiento, amén” (6M, 10,7).

This text of Teresa was the inspiration of the communication about the role of humility to the knowledge of the truth. Talking about the Truth, says Tomas Álvarez:

“En la psique de Teresa suele destacarse, quizá unilateralmente, el aspecto afectivo: su cordialidad, afectividad, amor, amistad... Sin embargo, su psicología femenina está fuertemente marcada por una constante cerebral: su necesidad de entender y entenderse, su inagotable afán por discernir la verdad... de las gracias místicas y de su vida entera”

²¹⁹.

Here God is presented as the supreme Truth and every single person as *homo viator* who chooses to walk by the way of truth or untruth. The truth then, for each person has an existential meaning that demands of us an answer: the right is humility and be humble, that is, walk in truth. From this starting point humility and truth are closely related. Tomas Alvarez argues:

“Ahora, en el umbral de la jornada definitiva, esa consigna se vuelve perentoria e iluminadora. Instalados en la Verdad de Dios, se impone la necesidad de ‘conformarnos y configurarnos’ con ella a base de una actitud que remodele nuestra condición criatural ante la Verdad y Majestad del Creador. Esa actitud y corriente es la humildad”²²⁰.

²¹⁹ TOMAS ÁLVAREZ, *Verdad: in Diccionario de Santa Teresa*, (Dir. TOMAS ÁLVAREZ) Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2001, 643.

²²⁰ TOMÁS ÁLVAREZ, *Comentarios al “castillo interior” de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, o.c., 266.

Truth for the human being has a double aspect of participation in the *Other* (God), as well as an aspect typical of him²²¹. Participated truth in this case points towards all the good that exists within us: creation itself in all its beauty and admirable harmony, the wonder the human being with his goodness and knowledge.

“Así, la experiencial radical de la Verdad de Dios, que hace libre al hombre, culmina en esta derivación aparentemente modestísima de la humildad. Pero humildad tal como la ve ella a través de su experiencia mística. No un degradante gesto de ‘*deiectio animi*’, repliegue hacia el apocamiento, reflejado en la estampa corporal de quien abaja la cabeza y se retrae del consorcio social. Para Teresa, esa concreción de la ‘humildad evangélica’ en el axioma de ‘andar en verdad’, se articula en dos o tres componentes:

Ante todo, la humildad es la profesión de la verdad, no en vocablos sino en hechos de vida. Es el gesto existencial de ‘caminar’ en verdad, delante de Dios y de los demás, no queriendo que nos tengan en lo que no somos. El andar en verdad exige en primer lugar el conocimiento de los propios valores. Pero bien registrados: valores que ‘poseemos’, pero que por lo general hemos recibido de mano ajena. De ahí la consigna de atribuir lo que de nosotros ha nacido. Y por fin, en el tejido de nuestra verdad hay una franja negativa: son los contravalores. Hay que reconocerlos. Teresa los designa en términos fuertes: ‘nuestra miseria y ser nada’. Miseria es la presencia de los pecaminosos en nosotros. Ser nada es nuestra radical condición de origen: no somos obra de nuestras manos. Nuestro ser es pura deuda: lo hemos recibido”²²².

Our own truth is this knowledge of dependence on God. Teresa refers to it as: “No tener cosa buena de nosotros, sino la miseria y ser nada; y quien esto no entiende, anda en mentira” (6M, 10,7).

2.2.1.5. Truth in Teresa’s life experience

a) Necessity to consult with the learned

Maximiliano Herraiz Garcia maintains the opinion that in Teresa often emphasizes, perhaps unilaterally, the affective aspects: warmth, affection, love, and friendship. However, her

²²¹ F. MALAX, *Humildad*, o.c, Burgos 2001, 346.

²²² TOMÁS ÁLVAREZ, *Comentarios al “castillo interior” de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, o.c, 268.

female psychology is strongly marked by a cerebral constant: the need to understand and to be understood, her inexhaustible zeal to discern the truth or authenticity of her mystical graces and her whole life, her recourse to scholars (preference for ‘scholars’ over the ‘spiritual persons’)²²³. This undertaking is aimed at providing her with ‘light’ or a guarantee of the truth of her experiences. She notes of her uncertainties, the impulse for consultation with the learned:

“Aquí comenzó el demonio a descomponer mi alma, aunque Dios sacó de ello harto bien. Estaba una persona de la iglesia, que residía en aquel lugar adonde me fui a curar, de harto buena calidad y entendimiento. Tenía letras, aunque no muchas. Yo comencéme a confesar con él, que siempre fui amiga de letras, aunque gran daño hicieron a mi alma confesores medio letrados, porque no los tenía de tan buenas letras como quisiera” (V 5,3).

Her persistent pursuit of learned people (scholars) will be the reason for all her autobiographical writings, from her first letter, until the eve of her death. These writings are not necessarily motivated by the theme ‘love’, but by the pursuit of ‘truth’. She is interested in the truth of her own life, the truth of the occurrences around her. There is a saying that certainly has historical background, that of ‘*the three truths*’; that is, she is aware of her being ‘beautiful’, ‘discreet’ and ‘pious’²²⁴. She does not believe in it as such, and when this rumor reaches her, she does not support it:

“Una de las cosas que me hace estar aquí contenta [lejos de los ambientes castellanos]... es que no hay memoria de esa farsa de santidad que había por allá [por Castilla], que me deja vivir y andar sin miedo que esa torre de viento había de caer sobre mí...” (Cta 88, 12).

She never conceives of any project in the spiritual sphere that does not have the truth as its foundation. “Espíritu que no vaya comenzado en verdad, yo más le querría sin oración” (V 13,16).

²²³ “Tercia decididamente en la discusión entre espirituales y letrados en la dirección de espíritu y se declara partidaria, en concreto contra su gran amigo Pedro de Alcántara, de someter las cosas del espíritu a la luz y discernimiento de los teólogos. Su experiencia por delante...” (MAXIMILIANO HERRAIZ GARCÍA, *Solo Dios basta. Claves de espiritualidad teresiana*, o.c., 196).

²²⁴ TOMÁS ÁLVAREZ, *Verdad*, o.c., 644.

Definitively, Teresa is, structurally, a seeker of truth, who needed to ‘*walk in truth*’; she is reluctant to participate in any sort of lies and ready to dismiss any discourse that contains falsehood within it. She highlights the evangelical truth that lying is devilish²²⁵. Instead, God is this same truth (V 40.1; C 19, 15), and that God is at work showing Himself and revealing everything.

Therefore, positioned before God, Teresa is not only found with God, but that she receives the truth of all things from Him²²⁶. We have seen that Teresa was constantly under the urge, which always drove her to maintain a close contact with the learned men of her day, always looking for confirmation of her experiences and clarifications of her doubts. Below we will explore this thirst as a constant in her entire life, always seeking to know the truth, even from her very tender age.

b) Teresa, a woman thirsty for the Truth from tender age

From the first note of her *Book of Life*, Teresa admits without hesitation, and with a rather surprising ease that her search for truth was initiated in her from her early stage in life. Jean-Marie Laurier asserts:

“Dios quiso que Teresa naciera en una familia que la despertó a la verdad y al bien desde su más tierna edad. Desde las primeras líneas de su relato da gracias por las grandes virtudes de sus padres...Durante su infancia todo le aparece a Teresa como don de Dios, como efecto de la liberalidad y prevención divinas. El Señor no había olvidado nada para que desde esa edad ella fuera enteramente suya”²²⁷.

In the personal history of Teresa, just to remember some of her disconnected episodes: for example, the discovery of ‘the truth as a child’ is one of her earliest memories (V 1, 4; 3, 5). Already as a nun in her low moments, she was to reproach herself having told half-truth to her father, Don Alonso, over her motive to justify her abandonment of personal prayer (V 7, 11-12). She is conscious of possession of a ‘natural abhorrence to lying’ (V 40, 4).

²²⁵ “...él es todo mentira”, “es amigo de mentiras, y la misma mentira” (V 25, 2).

²²⁶ MAXIMILIANO HERRAIZ GARCÍA, *Solo Dios basta. Claves de espiritualidad teresiana*, o.c, 203.

²²⁷ JEAN-MARIE LAURIER, *Andar en humildad*, o.c, 180-181.

In her adolescence, Teresa enters into a crisis of discovering the best way forward for her. Maximiliano Herraiz Garcia talks of an early search on truth in Teresa, which she narrates in her autobiography:

“Por propia confesión, nos consta cómo Teresa se encontró con la verdad, como constitutivo de su ser espiritual. Niña todavía, de cortos años, ‘el camino de la verdad’ le queda ‘imprimido’. Es como el resultado del monótono, pausado y sentido ‘para siempre, siempre, siempre’ con el que daba salida a su espíritu contemplativo Y empezaba a romper amarras de lo temporal y caduco”²²⁸.

The fact of being intimately bound to prayer, as well as her faithfulness to personal relationship with God, and her frequent reading of good books; all that point to an inexhaustible sign of her will to the truth. Having been a voracious reader, as child and as an adolescent as well, Teresa confesses:

“Espantábanos mucho el decir que pena y gloria era para siempre, en lo que leíamos. Acaecíanos estar muchos ratos tratando de esto y gustábamos de decir muchas veces: ¡para siempre, siempre, siempre! En pronunciar esto mucho rato era el Señor servido me quedase en esta niñez imprimido el camino de la verdad” (V 1, 4).

A few years later, while approaching her twenties, she writes again:

“Con la fuerza que hacían en mi corazón las palabras de Dios, así leídas como oídas, y la buena compañía, vine a ir entendiendo la verdad de cuando niña, de que no era todo nada, y la vanidad del mundo, y cómo acababa en breve, y a temer, si me hubiera muerto, cómo me iba al infierno. Y aunque no acababa mi voluntad de inclinarse a ser monja, vi era el mejor y más seguro estado. Y así poco a poco me determiné a forzarme para tomarle” (V 3, 5).

²²⁸ MAXIMILIANO HERRAIZ GARCÍA, *Solo Dios basta. Claves de espiritualidad teresiana*, o.c, 196.

She closes the *Book of Life* with a strong experience of God that sharpens her ‘vision’ of truth and of the existential transcendence which marks the culmination of a long journey of mystical experiences that broaden her and which radicalizes the meaning of the close bond of truth-freedom. The truth before which Teresa finds herself, for which she suffers and in which she delights, is neither the fruit of her intellectual researches, nor is it the result of her contacts with the best learned people of the day, rather, Maximiliano Herraiz maintains that it is a truth that is already implanted in her by God:

“No es una verdad ‘adquirida’. Es una verdad que se impone, una verdad infundida, una verdad que se le imprime o esculpe como acostumbra a decir, o palabra que se le abre sin esfuerzos propios en las profundidades de su ser. Una luz que se le da dentro y que le abre la entraña de todo el ser. Cegadoramente. No puede dejar de verlo... Porque la verdad le alcanza toda la persona. Y le ‘fuerza’ un cambio de perspectiva y de ritmo. Indefensa, se confiesa ante la verdad que la empapa y la envuelve. Un centro poderoso en torno al que gravita. Punto en el que se afirma”²²⁹.

This origin and eminently passive nature of truth neither can be circumscribed to the mystical period nor is it just a phenomenon localizable in the sphere of the forms infused by prayer. On the opposite side, Teresa is convinced that ignorance of God is the root of all the man’s evils. Not knowing God is the worst evil that can afflict the human being²³⁰.

“Dijéronme, sin ver quién, más bien entendí ser la misma Verdad: *No es poco esto que hago por ti, que una de las cosas es en que mucho me debes*. Porque todo el daño que viene al mundo es de no conocer las verdades de la Escritura con clara verdad. No faltará una tilde de ella” (V 40, 1).

Teresa discovers that the truth is nothing else other than the same God who offers Himself, who enters into us, in the secrets of our being; silently and barely perceptible, but in reality or even through a dazzling and overwhelming way. God always communicates himself, He infuses Himself always, He is the one who makes Himself known in every encounter with the human

²²⁹ MAXIMILIANO HERRAIZ GARCÍA, *o.c.*, 200.

²³⁰ *Ib.*, 215.

person, He is the one who opens Himself up in a free responsive act and in prayer, that is, in friendship as Teresa would describe it²³¹.

In the difficult years of conflicts within the Carmelite Order, she will find herself afflicted many times because the truth has not been ascertained. The nuns of Sevilla, who having been deceived into signing an infamous process, she wanted them to reflect on sincerity, that is, to divulge the truth. In addition, the prioress of this same convent, being deposed and vilified, instilled confidence for the fact that ‘the truth suffers but at the end it does not perish’²³².

c) Truth guarantees her freedom

At one crucial moment of her spiritual process, Teresa, the energetic iron lady, the conqueror, comes face to face with the reality of her inability to break free from her bondage or her emotional, active and passive dependency. She reflects about it and settles on telling it to the Lord in prayer. She was around 39 years old. Praying before an image of Christ ‘the wounded Christ she pours herself to Him:

“Mas esta postrera vez de esta imagen que digo, me parece me aprovechó más, porque estaba ya muy desconfiada de mí y ponía toda mi confianza en Dios. Paréceme le dije entonces que no me había de levantar de allí hasta que hiciese lo que le suplicaba. Creo cierto me aprovechó, porque fui mejorando mucho desde entonces” (V 9, 3).

She concludes the story narrating the grace received: “Creo cierto me aprovechó, porque fui mejorando mucho desde entonces” (V 9, 3). The immediacy of divine grace requires human time for its completion and realization and its authenticity is verified through the human person as well. Sometimes later she heard the same voice, she says: “La primera vez que el Señor me dio esta merced de arrobamiento. *Ya no quiero que tengas conversación [amistad] con hombres sino con ángeles*” (V 24, 6). In a few lines further afield, she asserts:

²³¹ “Dios actúa y se le comunica como verdad que la alimenta y la polariza. Ella se sabe ya flechada hacia los ‘bienes eternos’, hacia Dios. Dios la inunda de su luz. Todo, Dios, ella, las cosas cobran un sentido totalmente Nuevo” (Ib., 200).

²³² “Denle muchas encomiendas más, porque había de escribir a su merced muy largo si tuviera cabeza, y se dice mal por cartas lo que yo quisiera. No lo hago, que algunas quejas pudiera dar; que como otros sabían los grandes daños que esas benditas decían se hacían en la casa, no fuera mucho fuera yo avisada alguna vez -pues es a quien más había de doler- y no aguardar a que los remediasen los que nos tienen tan poco amor, como todo el mundo sabe 24. En fin, la verdad padece, mas no perece, y así espero aún lo ha de declarar más el Señor” (Cta 294,19).

“Sea Dios bendito por siempre, que en un punto me dio la libertad que yo, con todas cuantas diligencias había hecho muchos años había, no pude alcanzar conmigo, haciendo hartas veces tan gran fuerza, que me costaba harto de mi salud. Como fue hecho de quien es poderoso y Señor verdadero de todo, ninguna pena me dio” (V 24, 8).

We note from these texts here that, freedom is a grace, a gift, which enables the human being to respond. Thus, a gift is not a gift, if it has no recipient. The humble person has to ‘move out of himself’, by eliminating all the egoistic pretensions which stand in the way, by choosing the true way that leads to God. With this, Teresa introduces us to the deepest, the most intimate of humility which liberates and makes us human.

“Lo mucho que he puesto en este libro para que procuréis esta libertad (de cosas de tierra)... tan señoras de todas las cosas del mundo... por haber bien trabajado en tenerle en poco, y sujetándose de veras con todas sus fuerzas al Señor de él” (C 19, 4).

Her commitment to the truth as the foundation and guarantee of freedom, a freedom which is lived, that yields fruit in truth as well; thus it is not so much about the result of discursive intelligence, but so much about a commitment to love.

Conclusion

Up to this point we have come examining the value of the virtue of humility to know and walk in the truth, and we have done this from the Christian perspective which is ‘a humbling of oneself’, which is a voluntary self emptying from one’s dignity of knowing the truth of our own selves as well as God as the supreme truth. It is observed that Teresa’s view of humility is dynamic; it is no longer defined only as the consciousness of sin, but as full acceptance of the inner truth of man which culminates in the constant attribution of every gift to God and all fragility to man.

Christian humility is freed from the weight of scruples, remorse, doubt and contempt of self that have always been a scourge for her. The spiritual experience of Teresa of Jesus rehabilitates humility and can enrich a moral theology of grace and the virtues. For her the truth is nothing else other than the same God who offers Himself, who enters into us, in the secrets of

our being; He reveals Himself in every encounter with the human person. We will explore in the next part self-knowledge as the other face of humility in Teresa. Walking in truth is connected to self-knowledge because the end is the same; that is knowledge of the truth who we are in the light of God.

2.2.2. Humility as Self-knowledge

2.2.2.1. Knowledge of God and of self

Just hearing the phrase ‘self-knowledge’, it sends us almost automatically to the Greek thought, to Socrates, as one of its best representatives, and the famous Delphic aphorism ‘Know thyself’. However, already in the Jewish culture there existed a call for the people of Israel to know themselves and to respond faithfully to their God. Self-knowledge is a concept that St. Teresa would have known from the authors, whose works spoke of self-knowledge, as she did as knowledge of our own unworthiness of God’s grace that we gain from getting to know God and ourselves in prayer. To speak of that as self-knowledge in no way undermines the importance of the knowledge that we gain about ourselves from others, and she also placed great importance on having a wise confessor, on what we learn from being in relationship with other people, and reflection on our inner lives separate and apart from what is learned in prayer.

Teresa believes that at the beginning of any spiritual life, self-knowledge is indispensable in all aspects of the spiritual life it is “...una ayuda determinante para entrar en el Castillo”²³³. From the First Mansions onwards, Teresa emphasizes the need for the soul to learn the importance of self-knowledge:

“Esto importa mucho a cualquier alma que tenga oración, poca o mucha, que no la arrincone ni apriete. Déjela andar por estas moradas, arriba y abajo y a los lados, pues Dios la dio tan gran dignidad. No se estruje en estar mucho tiempo en una pieza sola. ¡Oh que si es en el propio conocimiento! Que con cuan necesario es esto (miren que me entiendan), aun a las que tiene el Señor en la misma morada que él está, que jamás - por encumbrada que esté - le cumple otra cosa ni podrá aunque quiera; que la humildad siempre labra como la abeja en la colmena la miel, que sin esto todo va perdido [...] Aquí hallará su bajeza mejor que en sí misma, y más libre de las sabandijas adonde entran en

²³³ ANTONIO MAS ARRONDO, *Acercar el cielo. Itinerario espiritual con Teresa de Jesús*, Sal Terrae, Santander 2004, 53.

las primeras piezas, que es el propio conocimiento; que aunque, como digo, es harta misericordia de Dios que se ejercite en esto, tanto es lo de más como lo de menos suelen decir. Y créanme, que con la virtud de Dios obraremos, muy mejor virtud que muy atadas a nuestra tierra” (1M 2.8).

She further advises that self-knowledge is not something that is acquired and then forgotten about: it is a discipline that is actively practiced throughout the spiritual journey until it becomes a way of life. Antonio Mas Arrondo similarly, emphasizes that it is a gradual process that results in ‘a life of prayer’. As a discipline, self-knowledge is not an activity in which a person simply engages; rather it is an ongoing process. He then summarizes Teresa’s advice on self-knowledge as following:

“Las razones que esgrime la santa son de peso: la vida espiritual cristiana no aleja de la realidad; al contrario, sumerge en ella. Una espiritualidad alienante (que las hay dentro y fuera del cristianismo) evita la realidad. El camino espiritual teresiano bucea en ella sin miedos, devolviéndonos a la realidad cruda, sin aceptar ninguna máscara. Para lograrlo, inicia en el propio conocimiento las primeras moradas, tarea que culminará en las terceras, con la virtud de la humildad. Humilde será (adelantamos el contenido de las terceras, a las que remitimos) quien acepte su realidad personal y colectiva sin disfraces de ningún tipo. Este proceso hay que iniciarlo de inmediato revisando la vida pasada, y presente para no engañarnos”²³⁴.

From the outset of the spiritual journey, then, the person must make a positive choice to proceed. Teresa reiterates throughout her writings that spiritual growth cannot happen by chance or good fortune; it is initially a ‘pro-spiritual’ choice by the person, and then becomes a process and journey through the mansions, with the singular aim to achieve union with God. Knowledge of self, through the ‘mirror of humility’, as described by Teresa, is the foundation of the spiritual journey.

²³⁴ ANTONIO MAS ARRONDO, *Acercar el cielo. Itinerario espiritual con Teresa de Jesús*, o.c, 53.

John of the Cross at the moment of drawing the path of spiritual journey in his master piece, the *Spiritual Canticle*, stresses the importance of self-knowledge and in what it involves for a person to walk the entire process of growth. Thus, we read in CB 4, 1:

“Después que el alma ha dado a entender la manera de disponerse para comenzar este camino, para no se andar ya a deleites y gustos, y la fortaleza que ha de tener para vencerlas tentaciones y dificultades, en lo cual consiste el ejercicio del conocimiento de sí, que es lo primero que tiene de hacer el alma para ir al conocimiento de Dios, ahora en esta canción comienza a caminar, por la consideración y conocimiento de las criaturas, al conocimiento de su Amado, criador de ellas, porque, después del ejercicio del conocimiento propio, esta consideración de las criaturas es la primera por orden en este camino espiritual para ir conociendo a Dios, considerando su grandeza y excelencia por ellas...” (CB 4, 1).

He puts together a remarkable synthesis of the components which consist in this self-knowledge, which he explains to be the knowledge of the theological truth of the human person: “es en Dios y desde Dios, donde tambien tenemos que aprender a conocernos. Solo midiéndonos ante Dios descubrimos nuestra real medida y dignidad”²³⁵. It is the virtue that is well understood as the truth, but in this case, the truth applied to knowledge of who we are, our relationships with God and with the others; the truth guiding our conduct in order not to be misled by the exaggerations of self-love. Self-knowledge interests us here, in that it discovers the limitation and relativity of the human person in all the aspects of his being or his acting.

Pedro Francisco Prijatelj says that, the first thing the Christian comes to know and experience is the limitation of their strengths, faculties and physical possibilities of multiple reasons sickness, tiredness, old age, limitation of time. More weight and significance in the moral life limiting of the intellectual forces: possibility of error, errors committed, the inability to understand things well, especially when it comes to the divine plan; these and other causes related to human intellectual failure have moral repercussions on which can have serious consequences²³⁶.

²³⁵ JUAN ANTONIO MARCOS, *Teresa de Jesús. La transparencia del misterio*, San Pablo, Madrid 2015, 198.

²³⁶ PEDRO FRANCISCO PRIJATELJ, *Antinomia conciencia del propio valer-humildad. En el epistolario Teresiano*, en: Monte Carmelo 71(1963) 2-3.

He continues pointing out that knowledge of this intellectual limitation is directly and immediately connected with humility. However, Humility comes directly to the knowledge of one's own nothingness; in the moral order without God's grace man can do nothing to save his soul; moreover, despite having always at his disposal the graces needed, often he does not respond properly to these divine gifts, therefore, exposing all his moral misery. The will has to recognize and accept voluntarily and honestly the reality of its littleness, its limitation and human imperfection. Such disposition must be translated, in turn; in fact, it has to manifest itself in the attitude and Christian behavior. Humility is to be externalized in three directions: in relation to God, to neighbor and to the self²³⁷.

Lastly, it is important to point out that the reason for mentioning self-knowledge in this context is that people often over-rate the state of their own spirituality, thinking that they have advanced to a greater level than they really have. In summary, it is necessary in spiritual growth to accept oneself as one is, and to become conscious of all those hidden aspects of one's psyche that are inhibiting spiritual growth. This is precisely why self-knowledge is so fundamental. The next section will discuss various aspects around self-knowledge, beginning with true humility as opposed to false humility.

2.2.2.2. True humility

We have explored above the significance of self-knowledge as a fundamental facet of humility. This section deals with humility in a positive perspective since there are often misconceptions thinking of it as something that diminishes us, when in the contrary it gives us true greatness if the person searches himself in the presence of God.

a) Authenticity before God

The person who finds himself before God finds that there is only one place where one can get to know himself fully in the midst of a light that leaves us naked as never before, and also which covers us with mercy as never before. According to Teresa the human person is less humble before he meets God and that the encounter with God takes place once the person is

²³⁷ PEDRO FRANCISCO PRIJATELJ, *Antinomia conciencia del propio valer-humildad*, o.c, 3.

humble²³⁸. There are therefore, artificial attitudes: constrictions, cowardice, the sappy spirits, melancholy²³⁹. All those Teresa exposes as cowardly souls under the guise of humility. She says: “Por eso digo, hijas, que pongamos los ojos en Cristo, nuestro bien, y allí dependeremos la verdadera humildad, y ennoblecerse ha el entendimiento, y no hará el propio conocimiento ratero y cobarde” (1M 2, 11).

Humility is the condition of all divine gifts; it is the first of its gifts and never ceases to be so, as Teresa confirmed by her own experience: “Es muy ordinario, cuando alguna particular merced recibo del Señor, haberme primero deshecho a mí misma, para que vea más claro cuán fuera de merecerlas yo soy” (V 11,11). Thus, instead of vesting in falsehood, that is, in cowardice and timidity, true humility is magnanimous; it is a force (virtue) that enables us to conform to our God and Spouse, (6 M 10, 6). Moreover, humility dislodges us of any sense of complacency and protects us against the danger of presumption and fearlessness. In short, true spirituality always consists of rejoicing in God, but more especially of walking humbly in his presence (1 M 6.8.) where and how He wants to lead us.

b) Audacity and determination

Growth in humility encompasses an audacity, a prerequisite for freedom in life and advancement in the virtuous life. Fear of knowing the knowledge of God and of self-knowledge is false virtue. For her, God is a friend of the courageous souls who do not shy away from growing in friendship with Him under the guise of false humility²⁴⁰: she asserts:

“Y no hayáis miedo que quede por El, si no queda por nosotras... No entendamos cosa en que se sirve más el Señor que no presumamos salir con ella, con su favor. Esta presunción querría yo en esta casa, que hace siempre crecer la humildad: tener una santa osadía, que Dios ayuda a los fuertes y no es aceptador de personas” (C 16,8).

²³⁸ “Entendamos bien, como ello es, que nos los da Dios sin ningún merecimiento nuestro, y agradezcámoslo a su Majestad; porque si no conocemos que recibimos, no despertamos a amar. Y es cosa muy cierta que mientras más vemos estamos ricos, sobre conocer somos pobres, mas aprovechamiento nos viene y aun más verdadero humildad” (V 10, 4).

²³⁹ “Porque en otra parte dije mucho del daño que nos hace no entender bien esto de la humildad y propio conocimiento” (V 13, 2); “...no os digo más aquí, aunque es lo que más nos importa” (1M 2,13).

²⁴⁰ “Quiere Su Majestad y es amigo de ánimas animosas, como vayan con humildad y ninguna confianza de sí. Y no he visto a ninguna de éstas que quede baja en este camino; ni ninguna alma cobarde, con amparo de humildad, que en muchos años ande lo que estotros en muy pocos. Espántame lo mucho que hace en este camino animarse a grandes cosas; aunque luego no tenga fuerzas el alma, da un vuelo y llega a mucho” (V 13, 2).

It is an undertaking that involves a determined life. Teresa's experience with 'determination' helped her to offer a catechesis, convinced of the importance of determined decisions, especially in mental prayer; just as at the beginnings as well as the continuation for those who are already advanced²⁴¹ in this way mental prayer. We will consider one of the key Teresian phrases:

“Ahora, tornando a los que quieren ir por él [camino de oración mental] y no parar hasta el fin, que es llegar a beber de esta agua de vida, cómo han de comenzar, digo que importa mucho, y el todo, una grande y muy determinada determinación de no parar hasta llegar a ella, venga lo que viniere, suceda lo que sucediere, trabájese lo que se trabajare, murmure quien murmurare, siquiera llegue allá, siquiera se muera en el camino o no tenga corazón para los trabajos que hay en él, siquiera se hunda el mundo” (C 21,2).

Normally the journey has some enthusiastic beginnings; however, its continuation requires a strong dose of enthusiasm and optimism in front of the ordinary or occasional difficulties of this journey²⁴². There are some general difficulties inherent in any human endeavor or in any enthusiastic beginning, especially if its immediate results are not visible. Even though she struggled for many years, she teaches us this basic but indispensable spiritual truth:

“Ya tengo experiencia en muchas [ocasiones] que, si me ayudo al principio a determinarme a hacerlo, que siendo sólo por Dios, hasta comenzar lo quiere, para que más merezcamos, que el alma sienta aquel espanto, y mientras mayor – si sale con ello – mayor premio y más sabroso se hace después” (V 4, 2); “tomad mi consejo y no os quedéis en el camino, sino pelead como fuertes hasta morir en la demanda..., con esta determinación de antes morir que dejar de llegar al fin del camino” (C 20, 2).

²⁴¹ “Para aprovechar mucho en este camino y subir a las moradas que deseamos, no está la cosa en pensar mucho, sino en amar mucho; y así lo que más os despertare a amar, eso haced. Quizá no sabemos qué es amar, y no me espantaré mucho; porque no está en el mayor gusto, sino en la mayor determinación de desear contentar en todo a Dios y procurar en cuanto pudiéremos no le ofender” (4M 1, 7).

²⁴² “Todo lo que es valioso en la vida exige un esfuerzo encaminado siempre al crecimiento personal” (JUAN ANTONIO MARCOS, *Un viaje a la plenitud. El 'Camino de Perfección' de Teresa de Jesús*, Editorial de Espiritualidad, Madrid 2010, 49).

J. Antonio Marco says: “la ‘determinada determinación’ teresiana no es una mera actividad puramente puntual, ni se puede reducir a un momento de oración en un rincón de capilla y con vela encendida. Se trata de una actitud existencial, como lo es la misma oración teresiana”²⁴³.

c) Transparency

Humility operates and involves an open platform of transparency. It ensures that we do not claim or even possess more than we are or are capable of, but more positively it can be translated to mean coming into terms with the truth of ourselves and what exact we possess as humans. Juan Antonio Marcos puts it clearly: “a través de ellas podemos intuir el misterio del ser humano, la Verdad de la vida, el misterio de Dios²⁴⁴”. Teresa was one of the transparent persons we can ever consider. She recommends the necessity of dealing with others in clarity; recounting on her dealings with her confessors, (in this case Pedro de Alcántara), she says:

“Como le di cuenta en suma de mi vida y manera de proceder de oración, con la mayor claridad que yo supe, que esto he tenido siempre, tratar con toda claridad y verdad con los que comunico mi alma” (V 30,3).

Transparency, truth of life and simplicity are some of the etiquettes that will always accompany Teresa, characterizing her manner of speech but especially her entire life²⁴⁵. The one who understands himself will rejoice at projecting the right and not a superficial image of himself, while on the contrary the one who is not transparent closes himself in his cocoon and cannot properly know himself. Thus transparency leads to self-knowledge. Tomas Alvarez says:

“La transparencia de la Mirada del místico - de Teresa - es luminosa. En positiva, son muchos e ingentes los valores que ‘tenemos’. Pero de esa suma de valores, es poco o casi nada lo que no hayamos recibido. Lo recibido de la mano de Dios es incalculable. Por eso Dios esta tan implicado en el verdadero conocimiento de uno mismo. Por eso la luz de su verdad es dispensable para libramos de la mentira y ‘andar en verdad’”²⁴⁶.

²⁴³ JUAN ANTONIO MARCOS, *Un viaje a la plenitud. El ‘Camino de Perfección’ de Teresa de Jesús*, o.c, 49

²⁴⁴ JUAN ANTONIO MARCOS, *Teresa de Jesús. La transparencia del misterio*, o.c, 9.

²⁴⁵ *Ib.*, 10.

²⁴⁶ TOMÁS ÁLVAREZ, *Comentarios al “castillo interior” de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, o.c, 268.

It is only the person who is transparent; who is a position to be transparent to God and His mystery; will be able to discern truly all manner of self-deceptions along the way. Transparency with God is the foundation for inter-personal transparency; likewise incapacity to openness before God (who knows and accepts the human being just as he really is) hinders inter-personal transparency. Thus, it is only the people who know themselves put God others before themselves, creating room for maturity.

2.2.2.3. False humility

False humility is double-faced: that is, regarding as humility that which has to do with pride, at the same time regarding cowardice as humility²⁴⁷. Teresa wants by all means to prevent the searcher of God from both said dangers.

“La relación con Dios puede estar marcada por ‘temor con sombra de humildad’ y lleva a la persona religiosa a inhibirse, sin reconocer y reformar su vida según las experiencias que Dios la puesto en su corazón, no solo para su bien, sino también para los demás. Se calla por temor a parecer virtuosa, favorecida por Dios, cuando en realidad las gracias que Dios da a cada persona no solo tienen un fin personal, sino también un destino comunitario en el único cuerpo que formamos”²⁴⁸.

What Teresa is implying here is that false humility consists in not walking in the truth; rather it is ‘to walk in lies or untruth’ or all that which is contrary to the truth. As principal elements of this virtue, we have already indicated the knowledge of God and self-knowledge. However, if one or both elements lack, humility will not be true. In fact, the innumerable Teresian texts that we quote here highlight the infinite folds of false humility; it can be reduced to this lack true knowledge of self or of God, as it is manifested in timidity and spiritual pride. Let us split both aspects of false humility.

a) Pride as opposed to humility

A development of humility cannot be complete or fully understood without analyzing its opposite: pride, which can only be overcome by humility. Teresa warns strongly of the subtle

²⁴⁷ F. MALAX, *Humildad*, o.c., 349.

²⁴⁸ BENJAMÍN GONZÁLEZ BUELTA, *La humildad de Dios*, Sal Terrae, Santander 2012, 146.

and insidious dangers of pride and false humility. St. Augustine talks of the false humility behind which “oculta una gran soberbia”²⁴⁹, against which he exhorts the superiors to know direct with strength, “no suceda que, por excels humildad, se pierda autoridad en el gobierno”²⁵⁰. Teresa argues:

“Pues así comencé, de pasatiempo en pasatiempo, de vanidad en vanidad, de ocasión en ocasión, a meterme tanto en muy grandes ocasiones y andar tan estragada mi alma en muchas vanidades, que ya yo tenía vergüenza de en tan particular amistad como es tratar de oración tornarme a llegar a Dios. Y ayudóme a esto que, como crecieron los pecados, comenzóme a faltar el gusto y regalo en las cosas de virtud. Veía yo muy claro, Señor mío, que me faltaba esto a mí por faltaros yo a Vos. Este fue el más terrible engaño que el demonio me podía hacer debajo de parecer humildad, que comencé a temer de tener oración, de verme tan perdida; y parecíame era mejor andar como los muchos, pues en ser ruin era de los peores, y rezar lo que estaba obligada y vocalmente, que no tener oración mental y tanto trato con Dios la que merecía estar con los demonios, y que engañaba a la gente, porque en lo exterior tenía buenas apariencias” (V 7,1).

By this, Teresa means that the devil may suggest, for instance, that pride is the reason why someone wants to advance in the spiritual life, which may therefore insidiously inhibit that person’s spiritual growth.

“Pues guardaos también, hijas, de unas humildades que pone el demonio con gran inquietud de la gravedad de nuestros pecados, que suele apretar aquí de muchas maneras, hasta apartarse de las comuniones y de tener oración particular” (C 39,1).

Amid the emotional issue of her youth, Teresa decided to avoid the encounter with God as Friend, considering herself unworthy of such a friendship.

“A san Pedro una vez que lo fue, a mí muchas; que con razón me tentaba el demonio no pretendiese amistad estrecha con quien trataba enemistad tan pública. ¡Qué ceguedad tan grande la mía! ¿Adónde pensaba, Señor mío, hallar remedio sino en Vos? ¡Qué disparate

²⁴⁹ AGUSTIN, *Epistola* 149. PL 33, 642.

²⁵⁰ AGUSTIN, *Epistola* 211. PL 33, 964.

huir de la luz para andar siempre tropezando! ¡Qué humildad tan soberbia inventaba en mí el demonio: apartarme de estar arrimada a la columna y báculo que me ha de sustentar para no dar tan gran caída! Ahora me santiguo y no me parece que he pasado peligro tan peligroso como esta invención que el demonio me enseñaba por vía de humildad” (V 19,10).

Teresa’s admonition here is to embark on prayer and not be frightened by our own thoughts. With regard to the idea that there are ‘false notions of humility’, J.M. Laurier adds:

“Teresa no descansará hasta que sea desenmascarada esta falsificación de la humildad operada por el espíritu del mal y el padre de la mentira. Abandonar la oración, a causa de su miseria y de su pecado, es renunciar a vivir en relación con Dios, a ser curado por él; y esto conduce, bajo pretexto de la desesperación. Suscitar la estima del gran bien que es la oración...”²⁵¹.

This suggests that pride may manifest at the start of the spiritual journey, when one is enthused by his own self-assessment of his momentum and by the spiritual activities associated with this progress. This progress may, however, be expressed as false humility and motivated by a desire for self-gratification. This is an understandable reaction, as the person, at this stage of the spiritual journey, despite good intentions and sincerity, may not yet be sure how to relate to God, the self or to other people.

However, as one is now being called to follow a new direction that differs markedly from what is offered by the world, the self may, in fact, be resisting the promptings of the spirit. The desire for union with God then creates a conflict with one’s previous way of life, as expressed in ingrained attitudes and actions. These are based on the values of the world, which emphasize selfishness and self-gratification, and they will certainly hinder one’s spiritual growth. This could be referred to as pride of self. The scriptures, too, comment on this type of pride: “The beginning of pride is man’s stubbornness in withdrawing his heart from his maker. Pride is the reservoir of sin, a source which runs over with vice” (Sirach 10:7-16). Similarly, the Book of Proverbs (18:12) says: “The human heart is haughty until destruction comes, before there can be glory

²⁵¹ JEAN-MARIE LAURIER, *Andar en humildad*, o.c 180-181.

there must be humility”. The following section, then, will be dedicated on at the forms of pride, namely, pride of self, cowardice and self-doubt.

b) Pride of Self

Teresa comments on this form of pride when she points out that honor is a delusion and that what we are led to believe by the world is honor, is not honor at all:

“Fatígase del tiempo en que miró puntos de honra y en el engaño que traía de creer que era honra lo que el mundo llama honra; ve que es grandísima mentira y que todos andamos en ella; entiende que la verdadera honra no es mentirosa, sino verdadera, teniendo en algo lo que es algo, y lo que no es nada tenerlo en nonada, pues todo es nada y menos que nada lo que se acaba y no contenta a Dios. Ríese de sí, del tiempo que tenía en algo los dineros y codicia de ellos, aunque en ésta nunca creo - y es así verdad - confesé culpa; harta culpa era tenerlos en algo” (V 20, 26-27).

In pride, there is a tendency to want to skip the foundational levels of basic prayer, thinking that one has already advanced beyond that point. Teresa warns that the only way to advance in prayer is by way of humility, and not by trying to skip ahead to contemplation.

Teresa is also severe in her condemnation of an inordinate attachment to wealth, honor, reputation, etc. and says that this attachment can be so tenacious that it is only when a person enters the Sixth Mansions that this pride can be totally purified. She also cautions against excessive timidity, which is sometimes mistaken for humility; at the same time, though, she also cautions against using humility as a shield to mask one’s lack of courage. In other words, a humility that hinders a person from undertaking great things for God is false: it is merely cowardice.

In the previous chapter we had seen that, in his treatise on the *Twelve steps of humility and pride*, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, warns against failing to guard the heart, being careless about examining one’s behavior, and the presumption of thinking that we are not like others, and that we have what we think of as a broader view than the church. He warns against being enamored of our own excellence; focusing attention on where we appear good, and either forgetting our faults or presuming they are forgiven. He warns particularly against spiritual pride the ‘fraudulent twist’ of thanking God while in our heart ‘attributing to ourselves some of the

glory and honor that belongs to God. This constitutes a habitual temptation in the lives of religious and spiritual persons²⁵².

John of the Cross says that to be humble is to hide in your own nothingness and to know how to abandon yourself to God: “humilde es el que se esconde en su propia nada y se sabe dejar a Dios”; he also says: “eso que pretendes y lo que más deseas no lo hallarás por esa vía tuya ni por la alta contemplación, sino en la mucha humildad y rendimiento de corazón” (*Avisos 40*).

It can be deduced from the above writings that true humility is in a spiritual battle with pride of self, which has been described above as self-love, self-interest and egotism. By definition, these involve self-absorption and are thus directly in opposition to the spiritual virtue of humility. The problem with false humility can be that it is really a type of defense mechanism that has the potential to mask psychological problems.

So, at the beginning of one’s spiritual journey, it is important not to try to ‘do it alone’, as it may, in fact, result in a relapse into the ‘original life’ that one is seeking to overcome. A spiritual director will thus need to guide and help the spiritual seeker to become aware of and understand the dynamics behind these internal struggles and to find the right path to God. The desire for independence, where one believes that one can progress alone at this stage of the journey, may in fact be a symptom of pride.

c) Cowardice

Regarding cowardice, Blas de Jesús says the soul that knows its own misery and does not lift its eyes to the considerations of the divine attributes is annihilated by the weight of its fears²⁵³. Teresa simply lists some specific examples, in which the soul is deceived by not knowing what consists in true humility.

“¡Oh válgame Dios, hijas, qué de almas debe el demonio de haber hecho perder mucho por aquí! Que todo esto les parece humildad, y otras muchas cosas que pudiera decir, y viene de no acabar de entendernos; tuerce el propio conocimiento y, si nunca salimos de nosotros mismos, no me espanto, que esto y más se puede temer. Por eso digo, hijas, que pongamos los ojos en Cristo nuestro bien, y allí aprenderemos la verdadera humildad, y

²⁵² SAN BERNARDO DE CLARAVAL, *Sermones sobre el Cantar de los Cantares*, vol. V (Edición preparada por los monjes cistercienses de España), BAC, Madrid 1987, Sermón 13, 3.

²⁵³ FÉLIX MALAXEHEEVARRIA, *verdadera humildad. En los fundamentos de la ascética teresiana*, en: *Revista de espiritualidad*, Madrid 22(1963)704.

en sus santos, y ennoblecerse ha el entendimiento - como he dicho - y no hará el propio conocimiento ratero cobarde; que, aunque ésta es la primera morada, es muy rica y de tan gran precio, que si se descabulle de las sabandijas de ella, no se quedará sin pasar adelante. Terribles son los ardides y mañas del demonio para que las almas no se conozcan ni entiendan sus caminos” (1M, 2, 11).

She often felt fearful of falling into the lack of humility regarding her progress in the life of prayer and mystical phenomena. On the other hand, she also had doubts about the authenticity of this phenomenon. She concludes:

“Procedía esto no de humildad, a mi parecer, sino de una tentación venían muchas. Parecíame que a todos los traía engañados y, aunque es verdad que andan engañados en pensar que hay algún bien en mí, no era mi deseo engañarlos, ni jamás tal pretendí, sino que el Señor por algún fin lo permite; y así, aun con los confesores, si no viera era necesario, no tratara ninguna cosa, que se me hiciera gran escrúpulo. Todos estos temorcillos y penas y sombra de humildad entiendo yo ahora era harta imperfección, y de no estar mortificada; porque un alma dejada en las manos de Dios no se le da más que digan bien que mal, si ella entiende bien entendido –como el Señor quiere hacerle merced que lo entienda - que no tiene nada de sí” (V 31, 16).

Teresa assures that this deception is so great that, there would be no need of demons for one to go to hell (V 19, 4). J.M. Laurier says;

“En el extremo opuesto de la falsa seguridad de las virtudes se encuentra la tentación, tan peligrosa como esta, de las falsas humildades. Es el demonio quien nos inspira inquietud sobre la gravedad de nuestras faltas. Nos presiona de todos lados para alejarnos de la oración personal y de la comunión eucarística, de tal modo que al querer acercarnos a este sacramento de amor, pasamos la mayor parte de nuestro tiempo preguntándonos si nos encontramos en buena disposición para ello”²⁵⁴.

It is easily understood here the paramount importance she attaches to humility in the problem of our sanctification and salvation. ‘Nor should we look at this Teresian assertion as

²⁵⁴JEAN-MARIE LAURIER, *Andar en humildad*, o.c, 320.

being exaggerated'²⁵⁵. Abetting these feelings of cowardice on the severity of its own sins, the soul leaves the reception of the sacraments, drives itself the edge of despair doubting the divine mercy offered to it; in its bewilderment it sees dangers everywhere and excessively distrusts itself of the advantage of his good works (C. 39, 1, 2).

Teresa's enumeration continues to uncover the thousand false humilities that the devil acting in the guise of humility, the soul fails to take advantage of God's mercy. She herself was victim of some of these diabolical deceptions²⁵⁶. Her directors helped draw her out of these doubts. Teresa will further ahead warn her sisters:

“No cure de unas humildades que hay, de que pienso tratar, que les parece humildad no entender que el Señor les va dando dones... porque si no conocemos que recibimos, no despertamos a amar... que mientras más vemos estamos ricos, sobre conocer somos pobres, más aprovechamiento nos viene, y aún más verdadera humildad. Lo demás es acobardar el ánimo (V 10, 4)”²⁵⁷.

Moreover, Teresa felt calm before the gossips and criticism of all sorts, because of these phenomena and especially on the topic of the foundation of the monastery of San José de Ávila. Then she understood that it was ‘not good humility’ (V 31, 14). In addition, at the very beginning, it seemed to her to be lack of humility thinking that she understood some states of prayer described in books, because she had already experienced it (V 30, 17).

d) Self-doubt

We have seen that self-knowledge enables growth in every person that seeks it. It puts us in touch with the stirring self-doubt too. Teresa believes that these fears are the effects of pride and not understanding ourselves completely. Humility in this case according to Vilma Seelaus,

²⁵⁵ FÉLIX MALAXECHEEVARRIA, *verdadera humildad. En los fundamentos de la ascética teresiana*, Revista de espiritualidad, Madrid 22(1963) 705.

²⁵⁶ “Yo, como no tenía los del alma, los pasaba con mucha alegría; mas cuando era todo junto, era tan gran trabajo que me apretaba muy mucho. Todas las mercedes que me había hecho el Señor se me olvidaban. Sólo quedaba una memoria como cosa que se ha soñado, para dar pena. Porque se entorpece el entendimiento de suerte, que me hacía andar en mil dudas y sospecha, pareciéndome que yo no lo había sabido entender y que quizá se me antojaba y que bastaba que anduviese yo engañada sin que engañase a los buenos. Parecíame yo tan mala, que cuantos males y herejías se habían levantado me parecía eran por mis pecados” (V 30, 8).

²⁵⁷ See also: “[Será] temor y no humildad, sino pusilanimidad” (V 31,17).

“is living in the truth of ourselves as finite and fallible yet as loved by God. We believe this even in the midst of our fears”²⁵⁸.

Such grounding in truth enables self-acceptance and unconditional acceptance of the other. We can reach a certain level of humility by growing in self-knowledge and by being honest about whom we really are: that all we are and have is a gift; that we are dependent upon God for everything; that on ourselves we can do nothing. Life teaches us how small we are in the scheme of things. We see the limitations of our good qualities, and we see our faults. We also see how little control we have over things that really matter. Teresa asserts:

“...un espejo para la humildad, mirando cómo cosa buena que hagamos no viene su principio de nosotros, sino de esta fuente adonde está plantado este árbol de nuestras almas, y de este sol que da calor a nuestras obras” (1M 2, 5).

We are finite, limited and therefore imperfect. We do not own ourselves, we are God’s handiwork. Further, we relate to a God we cannot see and whose love is often unfelt. This leaves us insecure and tempted to self-doubt. We find it hard to believe in ourselves and in the God/mystery, that defines us. Teresa understands the human struggle and she insists on the harm done to us by our failure to understand well this humility and self-knowledge. She too struggled with doubts about her true worth. Self-knowledge means accepting both God’s love and our human limitations.

Self-doubt is untruth. “Truth is in recognizing and accepting our being from God”²⁵⁹. We are humble to the extent that we know that we are nothing and rejoice in it, recognizing that our life and everything in it is a grace of the living God. It is not enough to know this, we should want others to know it and to treat us accordingly, and neither valuing us falsely nor honoring us for what is the fruit of grace.

Humility keeps us doubting when we should doubt; when we ourselves, in our imaginations or fallible intellects. It requires humility not simply to assert that whatever our minds hold is true. Nevertheless, humility also allows us certainty, by submitting or consenting entirely and unreluctantly to what God presents. Indeed, it is by this exercise of humility that we

²⁵⁸ VILMA SEELAUS, *Teresa revision humility: A matter of justice*, in VV. AA., *The Land of Carmel*, Rome 1991, 341.

²⁵⁹ *Ib.*, 342.

know what is certain, that we recognize our inability to dissent from the truth: intellectually, perhaps, the happiest of our limitations.

e) Remedies for false humility

What would be the remedies to false humility? The first step to get rid of false humility is to understand and realize that we act effectively moved by them (false humilities)²⁶⁰. It is a recipe in the same sore, because it is precisely the knowledge of God in all the above-mentioned aspects, which makes the soul fainthearted.

However, Teresa's conception warns us that temptation can reach such extremes that it would be impossible to apply this remedy because of the restlessness that false humility brings with it. Therefore, one must seek aid from elsewhere, from a helping hand, from a confessor or from other people dedicated to the same exercises as those of the soul that is tempted by the false humility. Thus, Teresa does not want her daughters to be timid, but with a holy audacity always grow in humility, trusting in the grace of God all amidst all circumstances.

Conclusion

Concluding on this section then, we realize that Teresa stresses throughout her writings that, without humility and self-knowledge the person cannot continue on their journey to God. Achieving humility requires one to continually conquer pride in its various forms. This chapter has outlined the means by which pride can be conquered and humility achieved.

It is through self-knowledge, says Teresa that we become more alert and aware of the attachments in our life and of the shadow in our personality that holds us back from spiritual progress. By growing in self-knowledge, we become aware of those parts of the self that were concealed in our ignorance: we make them conscious. Although this is difficult and requires discernment and considerable courage, it is an essential requirement for the spiritual journey towards union with God.

The importance of the pursuit of the 'right' kind of self-knowledge (or wisdom) is a theme that one can track from the Garden of Eden to more contemporary writings on humility²⁶¹. What is important to stress here is that humility, in this broadly religious sense, always means

²⁶⁰ FÉLIX MALAXECHEEVARRIA, *verdadera humildad. En los fundamentos de la ascética teresiana*, o.c, 708.

²⁶¹ STEPHEN HARE, *The Paradox of Moral Humility*, in: *American Philosophical Quarterly* 33, 2 (1996) 235-236.

and requires more than modesty or a realism about one's talents, skills, or capacities, for the humble do not simply acknowledge their limitations or resist overestimating their moral qualities but hold a positively negative view of the self and of the self's moral powers without God. Thus, if we are concerned to understand some of the most influential expressions of humility and how this has shaped the contemporary reception (or neglect) of this quality, it is important to recognize that humility has long been tied to a substantive metaphysic that instructs that to know and have contempt for ourselves is among the most important and salutary lessons for man. When humility is understood as a theistically grounded command, (I Peter 5:6) it can stand in sharp opposition to individual moral autonomy/reason. Moreover, when humility is cultivated as an imitative virtue, patterned (for example) after the life of Jesus, it can be at once both socially revolutionary (the low and humble will be lifted, the powerful will be brought low) (Luke 14:11, 18:14), and radically depoliticizing, counseling humble accommodation to a range of ascriptive class and gender hierarchies (Colossians 3:12-24).

As these setbacks may cause the adherent to give up or to veer off the path, it is important at this stage to have a spiritual director and a strong support structure. Where necessary, it may be helpful to receive some form of counseling, or attend a course in personal growth in order to appreciate the dynamics of the self. At that stage, the adherent is still learning to accept himself or herself with all one's faults, limitations and deficiencies.

It is important to note that self-knowledge alone does not necessarily lead to humility. If we focus only on ourselves, we are just as likely to end in discouragement, or even despair. A purer and deeper humility comes from contemplation of God. In the light of God's gracious love, our least imperfection shows up. However, we experience joy at the truth of who we really are, for, with all our limitations and sins, God loves us. Here we learn that of ourselves we are nothing, but we learn this while knowing with a knowledge born of faith that we are not 'of ourselves', but are truly held in existence and constantly graced by a God who loves us unconditionally.

2.3. RELATIONSHIP WITH PRAYER, THE THEOLOGICAL AND MORAL VIRTUES

2.3.1. Relationship with prayer

Prayer, as a relationship of intimacy (friendship) with God is the basis of all Teresa's writings. It is the heart of her life and teaching, her *Way of Perfection*. For her, prayer is the supreme meaning and value of human existence, since it is the inner life that animates the exterior, the journey within that is the journey into reality. Prayer is life before it is an exercise, a dimension of being before it is an experience.

a) Prayer as the school of humility

Friendship with God which is built on prayer cannot be forged without involving the truth in it. Teresa would say that without this strong foundation, the whole building would be a sham (C 5, 4). In this way, this engagement takes on board the condition of the two personalities, that is, God on one side as the Supreme Truth and the person practicing prayer on the other, who created in the image of God, participates in the intimacy, with a God who does not lie nor fail in His promises. This involves not dwelling only on ourselves, but looking at God:

“...no tener cosa buena de nosotros, sino la miseria y ser nada; y quien esto no entiende anda en mentira. Quien más lo entiende, agrada más a la suma Verdad, porque anda en ella. Plega a Dios, hermanas, nos haga merced de no salir jamás de este propio conocimiento” (6M 10, 8).

Maria Dolores Biló argues on the same line:

“Cuando Dios se revela como Verdad, el orante descubre ineludiblemente su propia fragilidad y pecado. De modo que si la verdad conduce a la humildad, la humildad enraíza al hombre en la verdad, le sitúa”²⁶².

This indicates that knowledge of God leads to self-knowledge, Christology determines anthropology²⁶³. St. Teresa speaks of how we are stuck in thinking solely of ourselves, ironically

²⁶² MARÍA DOLORES BILÓ, *En la Bienaventuranza de la espera. Esperanza y experiencia escatológica en Santa Teresa de Jesús*, (Tesis doctoral inédita), Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, Facultad de Teología, Salamanca, 2014, 558.

suffering from a lack of self-knowledge. The human person has a fixed idea of ourselves, thinking that we are humble, yet being self-obsessed. This is a trick from the devil to prevent us really knowing ourselves and the way of God. We seek satisfaction in things that are not actually fulfilling, that we think we need but we will not find true happiness in. Nevertheless, with prayer and self-knowledge, we gain perspective. We are able to truly ‘walk’ with God, to open our eyes to His graces in our lives and how we respond to them. The result is to better make decisions, to be joyful and to greater give ourselves as gifts for others and to live our lives as a prayer.

Prayer means to be in touch with the center of one’s life, where ‘the Divine Majesty’ dwells in His inner room in the depths of the interior castle, in our most intimate part. Here we are exposed to God, where we are transformed into God-centered persons making us the ‘*new creation*’ of Pauline theology and the *dwelling place* of God of Johanne writings. Thus, our true center is both in us and beyond us, and the transcendence we yearn for is filled by God’s self-communication.

Humility and prayer as true love order one another since “it is a parallel virtue on the road to prayer”²⁶⁴. Humility is a product of the way of prayer, as an attitude. The best prayer for her was one that leads to growth in humility. She says: “Yo no desearía otra oración sino la que me hiciese crecer las virtudes. Si es con grandes tentaciones y sequedades y tribulaciones y esto me dejase más humilde, esto tendría por buena oración”²⁶⁵. Maximiliano Herraiz asserts:

“Trato de amistad, opera y es un progresivo transvase de Dios al cuenco receptivo que es el hombre. Teresa gusta presentar la oración - la oración rudimentaria de los comienzos como la sublime e inefable de las cotas más altas - como un desvelamiento de Dios ofrecido al hombre. Entiéndase, desvelamiento de Dios (Dios sujeto, el hombre paciente), realidad originante y originada”²⁶⁶.

²⁶³ “...Cristo, el nuevo Adán, en la misma revelación del misterio del Padre y de su amor, manifiesta plenamente el hombre al propio hombre y le descubre la sublimidad de su vocación. Nada extraño, pues, que todas las verdades hasta aquí expuestas encuentren en Cristo su fuente y su corona” (GS n. 22).

²⁶⁴ SR. ELIA OF JESUS, *Humility as a road to contemplative prayer*, o.c, 148.

²⁶⁵ In a letter to Fr. Gracián, October 23, 1576, Jesús Castellano writes that true humility is the foundation of prayer life, is the matured fruit of prayer life, is the effect of mystical grace and prepares for higher mercies of God, is an arm against the traps of the devil and cement for spiritual life (JESÚS CASTELLANO, *Guiones de doctrina Teresiana*, Castellon, Bernes 1981, 51).

²⁶⁶ MAXIMILIANO HERRAIZ GARCÍA, *Solo Dios basta. Claves de espiritualidad teresiana*, o.c, 201.

Javier Sancho maintains that to know oneself necessarily implies openness to the truth about the self. One cannot really do without this relationship of friendship through which Teresa aims to lead us, by the way of prayer. She does not weary to insist to her sisters, and of course to her readers on the importance of self-awareness of the personal truth. Only then is a genuine humility possible, the humility that Teresa talks of as walking in the truth²⁶⁷.

It is a requirement of prayerful love, at the same time it is the fruit of its experience. It is born from the encounter with God, be it normal or mystical. Teresa positions humility as the basis for self-knowledge. In so doing, she evades the eminent inclination that prayer would be oriented, that is, towards negativity; she prefers that the one exercising this prayer, confront himself with God:

“Jamás nos acabamos de conocer, si no procuramos conocer a Dios; mirando su grandeza, acudamos a nuestra bajeza y mirando su limpieza veremos nuestra suciedad; considerando su humildad veremos cuán lejos estamos de ser humildes” (M 1, 2, 9; 2, 8).

In this undertaking, Christ is the Teacher/Master who ensures that we do not complicate our spiritual poverty, but that we may be filled with the discovery of our true selves, our own truth: “pongamos los ojos en Cristo nuestro bien, y allí deprenderemos la verdadera humildad... y ennoblecerse ha el entendimiento... y no hará el propio conocimiento ratero y cobarde” (M 1, 2, 11). Teresa says that prayer is the privileged place where the Lord instills light for understanding His truth:

“Pues como quedasen los estados en la hermana mayor, hizo el caso de ellos que su hermano; porque desde niña se había dado tanto a la oración, - que es adonde el Señor da luz para entender las verdades -, que lo estimó tan poco como su hermano. ¡Oh, válgame Dios, a qué de trabajos y tormentos y pleitos y aun a aventurar las vidas y las honras se pusieran muchos por heredar esta herencia!” (F 10, 13).

This means that every form of prayer in some way takes this ‘infusion’ though discreet and tenuous, of the divine truth. In fact, it is the thought that underpins the exposure of the literary image that is used for exhibiting her teaching on prayer in the ‘booklet’ intended to her nuns: Christ, Master of prayer, while the human being is His disciple. It is Christ who

²⁶⁷ FRANCISCO JAVIER SANCHO FERMÍN, *La meditación teresiana*, CITES, Ávila, 2002,35.

communicates the truth²⁶⁸; he who communicates it with love and humility, He is *subject* and *object* simultaneously, Teacher and Friend, who reveals who He is and His teaching²⁶⁹. In this case then, the human person is the recipient, the one to whom the Divine Master, the Lord communicates the truth. The Truth comes from the hand of prayer.

Touching on meditation, M. Herraiz on his part argues that self-knowledge is not only instrumental in the Teresian prayerful framework, but is one of the most original elements in her and that she distinguishes it from other ways of meditation that claim from the ‘forgetfulness or resignation of oneself or emptying of oneself. In the Teresian prayer, the person practicing this type of prayer is the one who discovers himself. Therefore, her way of prayer is a deeply humanized one²⁷⁰.

Teresa’s logic is clear: no one can give what he does not have and what does not know he has. However, all this is part of a much broader logic: no one can approach God truly, unless he first considers who he is and who God is in his life. Behind this emphasis and the importance that Teresa attaches to this, there is a hidden conception of the human being, which is a theological and positive key to understanding what the human person is. Teresa starts from this principle, from her own experience; that God dwells in the center of the human soul (V 40, 6; C 28, 11); that we are not just hollows, but rather the Infinite one inhabits us. She is for this reason, a great humanist, who lives convinced of the great dignity of the human being, which is the image and likeness of God Himself²⁷¹.

b) Beginners of the way of prayer

In the first steps, Teresa gives advice to the reader who wants to undertake the adventure of a lifetime of love with God. Her thinking could be summed up in one word: humility. Moreover, here, humility is to allow God do it for him. She says: “Este edificio todo va fundado

²⁶⁸ “Veo claro en estas cosas que Dios da, no poder nada de mí, antes me daba Dios a sentir miserias mías, que con cuanto yo pudiera pensar, me parece no pudiera ver tantas verdades como en un rato conozco” (CC 1, 22).

²⁶⁹ “Y no tanto como algo que consigue el hombre. Verdad infundida, don de Dios que se imprime en el espíritu del hombre y le va configurando progresivamente con el que, como andando el tiempo llegará a ver Teresa, es la misma Verdad, fuente y culminación de todas las verdades. La Verdad no se conquista. Se recibe, se infunde e imprime” (MAXIMILIANO HERRAIZ GARCÍA, *Solo Dios basta. Claves de espiritualidad teresiana*, o.c, 202).

²⁷⁰ “Quien no ora, quien no entra dentro de sí por la puerta de la oración, se ignora. Se queda en la cerca o ronda del castillo... El hombre no orante tiene una riqueza que, por ignorancia, no explota... Y, junto a esta visión de In propia riqueza, la oración pone al descubrirlo la verdad de la propia vida, de la propia situación moral” (MAXIMILIANO HERRAIZ GARCÍA, *La oración Historia de amistad*, EDE, Madrid, 1995⁵, 53-54).

²⁷¹ FRANCISCO JAVIER SANCHO FERMÍN, *La meditación teresiana*, o.c, 37.

en humildad; mientras más llegados a Dios más adelante ha de ir esta virtud” (V 12,4). Thus, everything is a question of love, all a joyful and a persevering undertaking, with a humble disposition²⁷². Nevertheless, humility is not timidity; rather it is a confident enthusiasm, which withstands failures²⁷³. We ought to avoid all manner of deception and delusion²⁷⁴.

In the first dwelling places, humility takes the form of self-knowledge. Teresa compares humility here with a bee leaving the hive to gather nectar. She proceeds:

“¡Oh que si es en el propio conocimiento! Que con cuan necesario es esto (miren que me entiendan), aun a las que tiene el Señor en la misma morada que él está, que jamás - por encumbrada que esté - le cumple otra cosa ni podrá aunque quiera; que la humildad siempre labra como la abeja en la colmena la miel, que sin esto todo va perdido. Mas consideremos que la abeja no deja de salir a volar para traer flores; así el alma en el propio conocimiento, créame y vuele algunas veces a considerar la grandeza y majestad de su Dios” (1M 2, 8).

Tomas Álvarez says that we could summarize her thoughts in a few sentences: the first thing that Teresa proposes to the beginner is the symbol of ‘interior castle’, to make him or her realize the dignity and beauty of the soul. It is not only made in the image of God, but also capable of containing it. He says:

“Podríamos resumir su pensamiento en unos pocos enunciados: lo primero que Teresa propone al principiante es el símbolo del ‘castillo interior’, para hacerle caer en la cuenta de la dignidad y hermosura de su alma. No sólo está hecha a imagen de Dios, sino que es capaz de contenerlo. El principiante no se conocerá a sí mismo si no se sabe habitado por El. El hombre no es sólo una centella de divinidad: es Dios mismo el que está ahí, en él. Pero a la vez, el hombre es capaz del reniego de sí mismo, capaz de introducir el mal en el castillo, cubrirlo de pez, fealdad y tiniebla. No se conoce a sí mismo si ignora esta segunda dimensión de su ser: grandeza y miseria en contrapunto”²⁷⁵.

²⁷² “...no está el amor de Dios en tener lágrimas, ni estos gustos y ternura que por la mayor parte los deseamos y consolamos con ellos; sino en servir con justicia y fortaleza de alma y humildad” (V 11,13).

²⁷³ “Conviene mucho no apocar los deseos... Quiere Su Majestad y es amigo de almas animosas, como vayan con humildad y ninguna confianza de sí” (V 13, 2).

²⁷⁴ “... haciendo que nos parezca soberbia... y entender mal de la humildad” (V 13, 4).

²⁷⁵ TOMÁS ÁLVAREZ, *Comentarios al “castillo interior” de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, o.c, 33

The risk here is to see only the dark side oneself. This inevitably incurs in the person each time self-knowledge is closed over the horizon of personal history, disconnecting itself from God. However Teresa points out in this mansion the fact that, the human person gains self-knowledge best in encounter with God, and so here one begins to perceive that this is a progressive process. “The deepening knowledge of God contains the gift of a deepening humility”²⁷⁶. Humility is neither putting a dull face:

“Pues procúrese a los principios andar con alegría y libertad; que hay algunas personas que parece se les ha de ir la devoción si se descuidan un poco. Bien es andar con temor de sí para no se fiar poco ni mucho de ponerse en ocasión...; mientras vivimos, aun por humildad, es bien conocer nuestra miserable naturaleza... Siempre la humildad delante para entender que no han de venir estas fuerzas de las nuestras” (V 13, 1, 3).

In the *Way of Perfection* and in the *Interior castle* Teresa points out a dangerous cliff in the life of prayer. Some sisters for instance, do not seem to make headway in spiritual life. In this, in spite of all their efforts they cannot see any progress in prayer. She maintains of a humble wait and hope²⁷⁷. Comparing those beginners of the way of prayer to those tasked with drawing water from a well, Teresa goes on considering the difficulties of that undertaking. There will be moments when there would be no water: during those moments of dryness, it is hard to concentrate; it would seem that all has been lost; then the beginner is filled with the sensation of wanting to turn back. Humility overcomes these difficulties by inspiring hope and strengthening the soul through orientating itself on the will of God. She continues: “gánase aquí mucha humildad; tornan de nuevo a crecer las flores... Ante una actitud paciente y humilde Dios... sin agua sustenta las flores y hace crecer las virtudes” (V 14, 9; 11,9).

What these lines indicate is that it is not always our personal considerations and efforts that enable us to see and be in contact with our interior, that is, getting to be aware of who we really are. God also prefers other means to aid the person grow in humility. It is a humility that is not acquired through understanding; “sino con una clara verdad que comprende en un momento

²⁷⁶ SR. ELIA OF JESUS, *Humility as a road to contemplative prayer*, o.c, 149-150.

²⁷⁷ “El Señor os lo dará a entender, para que saquéis de las sequedades humildad y no inquietud, que es lo que pretende el demonio; y creed que adonde la hay de veras, que aunque nunca dé Dios regalos, dará una paz y conformidad con que anden más contentas que otros con regalos; que muchas veces –como habéis leído– los da la divina Majestad a los más flacos...” (3M 1, 9).

lo que en mucho tiempo no pudiera alcanzar, trabajando la imaginación, de lo muy nonada que somos y lo muy mucho que es Dios” (C 32, 13; F 21, 6).

c) Those at the advanced stages of the prayer of quiet

After describing the difficulties of the first degree of prayer, Teresa goes on to describe the higher stages. In all, humility keeps on assuming a crucial role. With it the soul will be able to discern the mystical phenomena. Its presence is guaranteed; its absence consequently will be falsehood (V 15, 10). In the prayer of quiet, it understands that it is worth having a bit of understanding of humility²⁷⁸. In the following grades, true mystical phenomena will leave very deep and great humility; the reason being that at this level the person does nothing, rather it is the Lord who acts in the person “...para sacar humildad y confusión; porque el mismo Señor la da de manera bien diferente de la que nosotros podemos ganar con nuestras consideracioncillas” (V 15, 14).

Spiritual marriage is an act of humility of God: “¡Bendita sea su misericordia, que tanto se quiere humillar!.. [Él] nunca se cansa de humillarse por nosotros” (M 5, 4,3; F 3,13). Self-knowledge, as mentioned, is an essential element of humility, the foundation of prayer and traveling companion throughout life, even in the summits of mystical experience; it is born of the same encounter with God, of meditation and contemplation, of his mystery that confronts the person practicing prayer to the infinite contrast between the being of God and of the creature.

Teresa, in the chapters dealing with the Seventh Mansions, states that the whole foundation of the Castle is based on the virtue of humility:

“Y si a esto no se determinan, no hayan miedo que aprovechen mucho, porque todo este edificio - como he dicho - es su cimiento humildad; y si no hay ésta muy de veras, aun por vuestro bien no querrá el Señor subirle muy alto, porque no dé todo en el suelo. Así que, hermanas, para que lleve buenos cimientos, procurad ser la menor de todas y esclava suya, mirando cómo o por dónde las podéis hacer placer y servir; pues lo que hicieréis en este caso, hacéis más por vos que por ellas, poniendo piedras tan firmes que no se os caiga el castillo” (7M 4.8).

It is thus through focusing on dynamic and active prayer in the early stages of the spiritual journey, as opposed to stagnating spiritually as a result of absorption in the world, that the

²⁷⁸ “...que vale más un poco de estudio de humildad, y un acto de ella, que toda la ciencia del mundo” (V 15, 9-10).

dynamic mutuality of union in the spiritual marriage is anticipated. The mirror of humility necessary to acquire self-knowledge looks forward to another mirror of perfect mutuality between the soul and God in the spiritual marriage.

2.3.2. Relation with the theological virtues

We will address the three theological virtues in relation to humility; in which we will find out that, it is only when humility is fully developed can the three theological virtues, faith, hope and love penetrate the breastplate of the hardness of our hearts and re-model us in the breath of the Holy Spirit: “So that the full stature of Christ may be formed in us. This becomes clear if we take into account that faith and knowledge are ontological processes, which mean that man is changed by them in his essential being”²⁷⁹, and that, “God’s dwelling spirit activates faith, hope and love which opens us to receive God’s self-communication. The spirit affirms us in the truth of our being as beloved”²⁸⁰. E. Kaczyński believes that humility is a product of the theological virtues, at the same time it is the condition and foundation of all virtues. He says that, “al principio, el humilde acepta la ley que Dios le ofrece por medio de la fe, la confianza en la ayuda divina por medio de la esperanza y la unión con Dios por medio de la caridad; pero luego la plenitud y la madurez de las virtudes teologales hacen brotar la perfecta humildad”²⁸¹. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that “the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and love) allow man to share in God’s nature”²⁸² or as N. Martinez-Gayol Fernandez says “la ‘traida’ nos habla de la fisonomía que assume el dinamismo que configura la tension del ser humano hacia Dios”²⁸³. They are demonstrated as an existential realization of the grace which introduces new dynamism in us²⁸⁴.

a) Humility and faith

Faith in Teresa just as in the theological and religious language has different meanings. It expresses first and foremost her faith in God, who appears as the foundation of her spiritual life;

²⁷⁹ SR. ELIA OF JESUS, *Humility as a road to contemplative prayer*, o.c, 153.

²⁸⁰ VILMA SEELAUS, *Teresa revision humility: A matter of justice*, o.c, 339.

²⁸¹ E. KACZYŃSKI, *Humildad* in: *Nuevo Diccionario de Teología Moral*, (Dir. F. COMPAGNONI, G. PIANA Y S. PRIVITERA), Ediciones Paulinas, Madrid 1992, 886.

²⁸² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, o.c, n. 1812-1813.

²⁸³ N. MARTINEZ-GAYOL FERNANDEZ, *Virtudes teologales*, en: *La lógica de la fe. Manual de Teología Dogmatica*, (Angel Cordovilla, ed.), Universidad pontificia Comillas, 2013, 720.

²⁸⁴ *Ib.*

it also designates Christian faith as a whole: revelation, Scripture truths of faith; more specifically, signifies the faith of the Church, that she lived in profound communion; finally, it emphasizes her personal attitude of faith as a theological virtue lived in a relationship and encounter with Jesus Christ and the divine Persons. The intimate relation with the incarnated word of God, Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Teresian virtue of faith²⁸⁵.

“El pensamiento de la Santa se enmarca en estas coordenadas generales de la fe cristiana, pero al mismo tiempo las desborda, por la carga experiencial, que tanto una como otra perspectiva tienen en ella. Esta característica hace de Teresa de Jesús un testigo cualificado de la fe cristiana. Y lo es, no sólo para los creyentes en su proceso de maduración de la fe, sino también para los que buscan a Dios”²⁸⁶.

Teresa’s faith is firmly rooted in revelation and in the faith of the Church. It is which gives her security and confidence. If she discovers God in her interior, it is because this same faith has been revealed and been communicated; for He is God who is “vivo y verdadero” (R56), the one who communicates Himself and acts in her “Al revelarse a sí mismo, Dios quiere hacer a los hombres capaces de responderle, de conocerle y de amarle más allá de lo que ellos serían capaces por sus propias fuerzas” (CEC 52). In response, the human call is one of knowledge of God: “Al revelarse a sí mismo, Dios quiere hacer a los hombres capaces de responderle, de conocerle y de amarle más allá de lo que ellos serían capaces por sus propias fuerzas” (CEC 52). Knowledge of God points to a total surrender to God: “Trae consigo [esta comunicación] un particular conocimiento de Dios, y de esta compañía tan continua nace un amor ternísimo con Su Majestad y unos deseos aun mayores que los que quedan dichos de entregarse toda a su servicio” (6M 8,4).

Teresa’s experience of God’s revelation underscores the personal meaning of Christian revelation, highlighted by the Second Vatican Council: “quiso Dios, con su bondad y sabiduría, revelarse a Sí mismo y manifestar el misterio de su voluntad... En esta revelación, Dios invisible, movido de amor, habla a los hombres como amigos, trata con ellos para invitarlos y recibirlos en

²⁸⁵ CIRO GARCÍA, *Fe* en: *Diccionario de Santa Teresa*, (Dir. TOMAS ÁLVAREZ) Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2001, 297-298.

²⁸⁶ *Ib.*

su compañía”²⁸⁷. Her doctrine is centered on the progressive knowledge of God through the person of Christ. A rapid reading through her major works opens before us at once a dominating figure, Jesus Christ, contemplated or understood from His Humanity. The Church teaches that in many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days, He has spoken to us by a Son. Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father’s one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In Him, he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one²⁸⁸. Teresa firmly believed and accepted Christ as the Son of God and the fullness of the revelation. The virtue of faith “is a response in Christ to the Father. It is not necessary now to be connected to the patriarchs of Israel to relate to God the Father”²⁸⁹. Everybody pertains fully to God through Jesus Christ

Humility influences faith in that it changes the deep-rooted hardness of the human heart, so that the person loses the self-centered view of God (false faiths or beliefs); that of the other people, as well as that of the world. In pure faith can the person experience the real presence and communication of the Triune God in the centre of his heart, in the innermost mansion of the *Interior Castle*. The interior movement of faith and knowledge reveals to us progressively the presence of Christ. The body is joined to the head. Faith and knowledge are ontological processes”²⁹⁰.

b) Humility and hope

The virtue Hope occupies a central place in St. Teresa, just as it in Christianity and the human aspirations, with which they are closely linked. This correlation is based on the same conception of Teresian spirituality, whose core is the dynamic tension of man towards the encounter with Christ in whom the human person discovers the fullness of his being. As an ordinary woman in her daily life this virtue gave illusion to live for tomorrow with great optimism²⁹¹. “As a mystic this virtue attained great spiritual dimension in Teresa, with God as its

²⁸⁷ DV, 2.

²⁸⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, o.c, n. 65.

²⁸⁹ VARGHESE CHERIYAKADAVIL JOSEPH, *The theological and human virtues of St. Teresa of Jesus in her letters*, Facultat de Teologia de Catalunya, Barcelona 2011, 45.

²⁹⁰ SR. ELIA OF JESUS, *Humility as a road to contemplative prayer*, o.c, 150.

²⁹¹ “El arco de la esperanza abarca toda su vida, desde su conversión hasta la cumbre del matrimonio espiritual y desde las cimas de la unión mística hasta el encuentro definitivo con el Señor en la gloria. Es una actitud esencialmente dinámica y en tensión permanente hacia el futuro de la salvación. Se fundamenta en la confianza en Dios y, al mismo tiempo, en el esfuerzo por conseguir lo que espera con el auxilio divino”. (CIRO GARCÍA, *Esperanza en: Diccionario de Santa Teresa*, (Dir. TOMAS ÁLVAREZ) Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2001, 258).

centre as the supreme truth”²⁹². It is a fact that, in our day-to-day life we are sustained by hope. We just cannot live without it. Every human action has a motive or stimulating reason; he has a hope whether it may be true or false. We need hope to be able to look calmly and with assurance at life itself. It is a driving force in life. As the natural man lives by natural hope, so does the Christian life by Christian hope and cannot survive without it²⁹³; “llegada un alma aquí [postrar grado de oración], no es sólo deseos los que tiene por Dios; Su Majestad la da fuerza para ponerlos por obra” (V 21, 5).

This experience of Christian hope comprises the essential elements that define it as a theological virtue: “la esperanza es la virtud teologal por la que aspiramos al Reino de los cielos y a la vida eterna como felicidad nuestra, poniendo nuestra confianza en las promesas de Cristo y apoyándonos no en nuestras fuerzas, sino en los auxilios de la gracia del Espíritu Santo”²⁹⁴. Nevertheless, theological hope is not lived outside the human aspirations²⁹⁵

Without hope, there could be despair of salvation, or conversely, we would be tempted to being arrogant and attributing merit of the success of our work to ourselves²⁹⁶: “...se arroga exclusivamente el mérito de su obrar, de la orientación de su camino o de la llegada a la meta”²⁹⁷. From this experience, the Christian can rejoice in having been achieved by the grace of Christ and glory “in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5, 2). For if, God is on his side, who can against him? “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how not also with Him freely give all things?” (Rom 8, 31-32). Supported by her faithfulness to God and the word of Christ, Teresa embarks on the conquest of God as absolute good: “solo Dios basta”. Everything is subject to this target, which increasingly polarized hope. This translates into a burning desire for God, who takes her to see everything in relation to Him. It also explains their detachment from all that is not God and his dominion over all things, which translates into a remarkable freedom from to earthly realities.

²⁹² VARGHESE CHERIYAKADAVIL JOSEPH, *The theological and human virtues of St. Teresa of Jesus in her letters*, o.c., 68.

²⁹³ BERNARD OLIVER, *Christian hope*, The Newman Press, New York 1963, 3.

²⁹⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, o.c., no. 1817.

²⁹⁵ “La virtud de la esperanza corresponde al anhelo de felicidad puesto por Dios en el corazón de todo hombre; asume las esperanzas que inspiran las actividades de los hombres; las purifica para ordenarlas al Reino de los cielos; protege del desaliento; sostiene en todo desfallecimiento; dilata el corazón en la espera de la bienaventuranza eterna” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, o.c., n. 1818).

²⁹⁶ J. R. FLECHA ANDRÉS, *Vocación a la esperanza cristiana*, 143.

²⁹⁷ *Ib.*

In the Teresian thought, 'walking in truth is the symptom of a healthy personality. In addition, it is the attitude that allows us to know, accept and conquer ourselves. To avoid the temptation of believing ourselves more than we are (pride) or accentuate both our weakness (cowardice) and anticipate that trial, difficulty or crisis highlight the truth. The humble acceptance of our condition must be translated into concrete works in all directions and domains of relationship: before God, living out our filial dependence on trust and abandonment in His mercy and providence as well as accepting his will and to work with it with courageous spirit:

“Ante el prójimo: amándole y aceptándole como a nosotros mismos, valorando sus cualidades y entregando la vida con disponibilidad y servicio. Ante sí mismo: con una proporcionada y realista estima de sí, fundada en la esperanza teologal, sin pasividades ni encogimientos pusilánimes. De la humildad cristiana y del abandono esperanzado y absoluto en Dios nace la osadía y la magnanimidad, el temor y la vigilancia”²⁹⁸.

Possession of God is the highest good. However, this is not fully achieved and definitely in this life, but eternal life, pierced the barrier of death. This is the final goal of the Christian salvation to which all steps are aimed Teresa. It is the eschatological dimension of hope²⁹⁹.

c) Humility and love

In the life and writings of St. Teresa, the theme of love pervades in its various dimensions. She met with love throughout her life, from the beginning to the end in her infancy, adolescence, youthfulness and in the matured age. In all her being, she was a woman²⁹⁹ and she continued to be the same in all her structure and ideas. Love was a part of her psychology and it always sought friendship. Her capacity to understand and relate with others was considered as a special feature of Teresian personality. As a simple woman she accepted everyone to her heart and in the same way others too accepted her. The love that we find in her writings too had its two basic dominant aspects: love of God and love for neighbor. These two virtues harmoniously blended in the daily life of St. Teresa.

²⁹⁸ MARÍA DOLORES BILÓ, *En la Bienaventuranza de la espera. Esperanza y experiencia escatológica en Santa Teresa de Jesús*, o.c, 556.

²⁹⁹ CIRO GARCÍA, *Esperanza en: Diccionario de Santa Teresa*, (Dir. TOMAS ÁLVAREZ) Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2001, 261.

According to *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* love is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own selves, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God³⁰⁰, while St. Paul presents love as the greatest of the three virtues (1Cor 13,13) and the link to perfection (1Cor 13,14). This is the theological and pastoral setting from which emerges the doctrine and experience of St. Teresa over the Christian love. In her love assumes a dimension of totality and fullness. In its dual aspect of love for God and the neighbor is everything, as the Apostle nothing would be explainable without it. It also represents the summit of holiness and authentication of the contemplative life.

The theological dimension of love of God and neighbor penetrated in whole her being and everyone she loved. Certain persons who entered in the circle of her friendship, in its profound vibrations, “experienced this spark of her love. Her contact with God as friend determined how she dealt with fellow beings, her love and her preferences. Her friendship has a supernatural aspect but by this, she does not cease to be human. This true love demands an immersion into the world of the neighbor”³⁰¹ or as Teresa says:

“Quien de veras aman a Dios, todo lo bueno aman, todo lo bueno quieren, todo lo bueno favorecen, todo lo bueno loan, con los buenos se juntan siempre y los favorecen y defienden; no aman sino verdades y cosa que sea digna de amar. ¿Pensáis que es posible quien muy de veras ama a Dios amar vanidades?” (CE 40, 3).

Love comes to perfection only in humility, because our hardness of heart is its formidable obstacle. The fact that Teresa stresses that humility embraces love (all other virtues as well) is noteworthy because it implies that humility, by definition, must be the absence of self-interest in order to have love of neighbor and love of God “concertábamos irnos, pidiendo por amor de Dios, para que allá nos descabezasen” (V 1, 4). Furthermore, Teresa continues to emphasize that the cultivation of a deepening humility is a sign of holiness:

“No sé si queda dado bien a entender, porque es cosa tan importante este conocernos, que no querría en ello hubiese jamás relajación, por subidas que estéis en los cielos; pues

³⁰⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, o.c, n.1822.

³⁰¹ VARGHESE CHERIYAKADAVIL JOSEPH, *The theological and human virtues of St. Teresa of Jesus in her letters*, o.c, 87.

mientras estamos en esta tierra no hay cosa que más nos importe que la humildad. Y así torno a decir que es muy bueno y muy rebueno tratar de entrar primero en el aposento adonde se trata de esto, que volar a los demás; porque éste es el camino, y si podemos ir por lo seguro y llano, ¿para qué hemos de querer alas para volar?; mas que busque cómo aprovechar más en esto. Y a mi parecer jamás nos acabamos de conocer si no procuramos conocer a Dios; mirando su grandeza, acudamos a nuestra bajeza; y mirando su limpieza, veremos nuestra suciedad; considerando su humildad, veremos cuán lejos estamos de ser humildes” (1M 2, 9).

What all these underscores is that true love is a process that aims outwards towards the (other), who in this case happens to be God and neighbor. It is a product of the giving oneself for the sake of the other; it demands an immersion into the world of God and neighbor. It is not blind love rather extremely awake. It is a humble love as long as it seeks to love God in truth and neighbor as neighbor without self-interest or egoism. A sincere love from the core of a person has a renewing and energizing power in others since the person begins to know himself through genuine loving relationship. This Teresian love has two special features: it sought proximity; it rises to perfection through a supernatural friendship. This is the theological reality of the Christian life, in which the spiritual life is founded and which Teresa summarized in this expression: we are rich “si no conocemos que recibimos, no despertamos a amar” (V 10, 4).

2.3.3. Other virtues

a) Freedom and detachment

True freedom for Teresa is that which is experienced in front of oneself, in front of things, and in front of others: not being attached to anything is the key here. First, freedom from oneself because “no hay peor ladrón” (C 10, 1), that the person is his own enemy as long as it has to do with the personal cares and attachments. Secondly she talks of freedom from things, those which prevent us from realizing our own selves: “como una persona que estuviese del todo atada y liada y atados los ojos, que aunque quiere ver, no puede” (CC 21, 2). The means to free oneself is through return to or fixing the eyes on Lord as Juan Antonio Marcos puts it:

“En ambos casos, el remedio teresiana para liberarse tanto del ego como del apego a “las cosas” lo planteará en clave positiva ‘volverse a Dios’, y lo hará apelando a la esfera de los

“pensamientos” como primer ámbito terapéutico”³⁰²; “gran remedio es para esto traer muy continuo en el pensamiento la vanidad que es todo y cuán presto se acaba, para quitar las afecciones de las cosas que son tan baladíes y ponerla en lo que nunca se ha de acabar; y aunque parece flaco medio, viene a fortalecer mucho el alma, y en las muy pequeñas cosas traer gran cuidado; en aficionándonos a alguna, procurar apartar el pensamiento de ella y volverle a Dios, y su Majestad ayuda (C 10,2).

Thirdly she talks of the freedom of persons that deny us autonomy and growth, she recounts: “No consintamos, ¡oh hermanas!, que sea esclava de nadie nuestra voluntad, sino del que la compró por su sangre” (C 4,8). The only attachment which is permissible is attachment to God because the person grows in self-knowledge through the knowledge of God: “solo esta atadura está permitida, y lo está porque es la única fuerza liberadora: es el vínculo divino el único que no solo no esclaviza, sino que potencia lo mejor de la libertad humana”³⁰³.

John of the Cross offers another description of enslavement, referring to people at an advanced stage in the way of personalization, which is still a ‘sensitive part’, the onslaught of the “*hombre viejo*”, of which Paul speaks, the false *I* that threatens us of degradation, of death: “los furiosos apetitos de la sensualidad”. Karl Rahner argues:

“La libertad tiene, por consiguiente, una carácter teológico no solo cuando Dios es pensado explícitamente dentro de unas categorías objetivas junto a otros objetos, sino siempre y en todas partes, a partir de esencia de la libertad, porque en cada acto libre Dios está a temáticamente como su fundamento sustentador y su ultimo ‘hacia el absoluto... la libertad es ante todo ‘libertad óptica’. No es la mera cualidad de u acto ejecutado de vez en cuando y de su potencia, sino el rasgo transcendental del mismo ser del hombre”³⁰⁴.

Freedom is not an absolute value in itself. It feeds on truth and serves the truth. Freedom in concrete circumstances, in which one finds himself, depends necessarily on the truth; with it, it is possible to achieve the dominion of oneself. Despite the sacrifices made by the person to denounce everything and enter into the dominion of God, vigilance is still required to free

³⁰² JUAN ANTONIO MARCOS, *Teresa de Jesús. La transparencia del misterio*, o.c, 26.

³⁰³ *Ib.*, 2.

³⁰⁴ KARL RAHNER, *La gracia como libertad*, o.c, 33, 45.

himself. Teresa is aware that this is the most important business, because otherwise the thief has remained in the house with the doors closed. The way out of this dilemma is to look at all things the will of God and not be guided by the whims of the moment. Detachment carries a total gift of self to God:

“El punto está en que se le demos (el palacio del alma) por suyo con toda determinación y le desembaracemos para que pueda poner y quitar como en cosa propia... Y como él no ha de forzar nuestra voluntad, toma lo que le damos, mas no se da a Sí del todo, hasta que nos damos del todo” (C 28,12).

The virtue of detachment is the inseparable companion to humility. They are so closely intertwined that, sometimes it is almost impossible to distinguish between them. It would seem that the whole concept of humility would also have to be understood in the light of absolute detachment, by virtue of total self-denial of the created values. It is evident on the one hand, that detachment or self-denial falls squarely within the concept of humility; on the other, one must admit that detachment and humility are almost mistaken for each other, because of the identical nature that motivates them³⁰⁵. Teresa commenting on these virtues that they are hidden from the eyes of those who possess them while the other people see their fruits in them (in those who possess them), says: “estas virtudes tienen tal propiedad que se esconden de quien las posee, de manera que nunca las ve ni acaba de creer que tiene ninguna” (C 10, 4).

Teresa always preserves and leaves everything that touches an admirable richness and breadth of concepts and criterion. When she speaks of detachment, she takes it in its broadest sense: that is, detachment of spiritual or material, internal or external goods, their use, all that is detachment, its selflessness. This virtue, just as it is with humility, has its origin in ‘the luminous experience of Eternal Truth’, ‘walking in truth’³⁰⁶. This confirms the proximity of origin as well as their close bond that exists between them. Teresa says that both humility and detachment always go together: “Algunas cosas... son necesarias - a las que - pretenden llevar camino de oración... La una, es amor unas con otras; otra, *desasimiento* de todo lo criado la otra verdadera *humildad*, que aunque la digo a la postre es la principal y las abraza *todas*” (C 4, 4).

Detachment is the fountain of freedom and dominion; it excludes all manner of attachment and possession which at the end of the day enslave the person, both in material goods

³⁰⁵ JAIME DE LA CRUZ, *El pensamiento de santa teresa sobre la virtud de la humildad*, o.c, 129

³⁰⁶ *Ib.*, 134.

as well in interpersonal relations. The detached person does not put emphasis in anything at all, because he opts for the 'all'. In the words of the Teresa: 'God alone enough' (Poems) and this is not an exclusive phrase, rather it is a synthesizing one because in God we find everything. Detachment consists of a choice for God, according to which He is chosen as the only good, where as all else is relativized. When she embarks to talk about this virtue, the Teresa introduces this topic with the following words: "Ahora vengamos al desasimiento que hemos de tener, porque en esto está el todo si va con perfección... Porque abrazándonos con sólo el Criador y no se nos dando nada por todo lo criado..." (C 12, 1). Just as she understands, detachment unifies all forces in the person and focuses them on God. It is also worth bearing in mind that this virtue is prior to the religious maturity. The strength of this attitude therefore, according the opinion of St. Teresa, is in guiding all the desires and wishes of the person to God.

b) Foundation of Christian perfection

In the First Mansions, Teresa emphasizes that the foundations of humility must be established on knowledge of the self, which is an issue that was discussed earlier in this chapter. Teresa also notes that the examination of one's conscience could at best result only in *reasonable* humility, whereas the soul really needs *fervent* humility. In the Seventh Mansions she repeats the importance of basing this way in humility. She asserts: "Este edificio todo va fundado en humildad; mientras más llegados a Dios más adelante ha de ir esta virtud" (V 12,4).

It was pointed out above that fervent humility cannot be obtained by a person's own efforts, but only granted by the grace of God. Teresa indicates that, even though acts of humility by themselves have only a small effect, they are nonetheless an indication of our goodwill, which God accepts and rewards. In this regard, Teresa gives the following advice:

"¡Qué miserable es la vida en que vivimos! Porque en otra parte dije mucho del daño que nos hace, hijas, no entender bien esto de la humildad y propio conocimiento, no os digo más aquí, aunque es lo que más nos importa y aun plega al Señor haya dicho algo que os aproveche" (1M 2.13).

Teresa's comment suggests that humility is not acquired instantly: it needs continuous self-examination and self-reflection in searching to find humility through prayer. The activity of

prayer opens the soul to God and results in the realization of the person's 'lowliness' in comparison with God's 'grandeur'. It is more than just a realization of 'lowliness': it also awakens the potential of the soul to encounter its capacity for God in spite of simultaneously experiencing its lowliness.

Teresa offers encouragement to the spiritual seeker by pointing out that the soul is capable of more than can be imagined. Humility thus encourages the soul to look forward to what it is capable of in its relationship with God in union. This is not limited by its nature, but extends to what God wishes that the soul achieve in progressing further into the innermost mansions. The counterpoint to such humility is pride, which has also been tackled earlier on.

Conclusion

To conclude this section I would like to highlight a point that I consider important. I think the Teresian thought on personal knowledge has a characteristic element which distinguishes the various visions of her time on the subject, and that may be related to the mystical experience. Teresa points out the importance of personal knowledge but without insisting on an introspective way, as we have noted. She opts for affective way of the heart. Love being the measure of all things, the exercise of self-knowledge does not consist in observing desolation or consolation, nor motions or desires to know the real motivations. Teresa simply will present the prayer as a gateway to enter into oneself and, in the light of the greatness of God, know your own truth.

We are convinced that love, understood as the construction of healthy and strong relationships, detachment as a path of freedom, and humility as search for truth itself, are virtues as valid for man of the XXI century as they were for men S. XVI. This is because they point to his very being, and therefore are able to transform him from his roots, because the move to live in accordance with their own nature, even without any religious reference.

I think in the minds of Teresa all these terms are closely linked, because a relationship with God can only be based on the solid foundation of truth, the result of self-knowledge that Teresa practices is achieved through the practice of prayer and meditation and the rest of the virtues. If there is no authenticity and truth, therefore there will be no possibility of relationship. From there Teresa's insistence that self-knowledge is 'the bread and delicacies all have to eat...' authenticity and transparency, the result of an encounter with the truth ought to be the foundation

of the relationship with God throughout the spiritual process, which actually extends throughout life.

CHAPTER III

A PROPOSAL FOR MODERN MAN WALKING IN THE TRUTH, A PATH TO SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

In the present culture it is very difficult to understand humility at a theoretical as well as a practical level, where there are exaggerated search of self-esteem. Man today wants by whatever means possible to be self-sufficient and self-reliant which indicates a tendency towards personal autonomy, something that is been propelled by technology; this leads many people to adopt an outlook of independence from everything, including God, excluding the personal dimension of this same virtue. Modern man asks himself why he ought to surrender himself to God and others just like his forefathers did; why should he be humble as regards to his relationship with God, and with the neighbor if he is not inferior to him, and what really is implied by humility.

Negation of humility is not only noticeable in existential individualism, 'but in a collective fascism of yesterday and Marxism of today'³⁰⁷, whereby the person is not considered more than just a part of the whole. Throughout the history of Christianity, humility has been central to the understanding of Christian discipleship. However, in an age psychologically attuned to the problem of high self-esteem and in a culture fixated on self-promotion, humility has become an unpopular, if not a forgotten virtue. Once regarded as the Christian attribute founded in an authentic sense of creature-hood and the acknowledgment of personal need for God and a total abandonment to the will of God, humility is now looked upon by many as a weakness or character flaw. Humility goes against a deep-seated impulse in our culture to overcome or simply to deny the frailty, imperfection and incompleteness of our lives. Moreover, in our image-conscious control-oriented world, it is often associated with passivity.

Attention is given to the power of our human capacities and each person's responsibility for shaping his or her identity and social context. Those at the margins of society and of the church are encouraged to stand up and be counted while those in subservient positions are urged to confront the structures of domination. However, these essential Christian values tend to be placed in opposition to humility, which is regarded at its best as a private, ascetical disposition

³⁰⁷ E. KACZYŃSKI, *Humildad* in: *Nuevo Diccionario de Teología Moral*, o.c, 881.

and at worst, as a viewpoint of weak passivity. Amidst the contemporary efforts to identify and cultivate pastoral and empowering aspects of discipleship, humility has been relegated to the periphery of Christian life and is often seen as a hindrance to social justice.

There is no doubt however, that the Christian of today needs to employ some consciousness of Himself before God. By placing God in the center of everything, the human being is bound to know himself in the light of God. The humble person is the one who sees things as they really are; the good as good and the evil as evil. To the extent that, as the human being grows in humility, the more accurate will be his view of reality. Thus, humility is the foundation of the entire spiritual life because it encompasses all its aspects. Without this virtue, we will never advance in holiness. Yet humility is not simply an abstraction: it is a virtue to be learned and practiced through the often-painful circumstances of daily life.

3.1. Some relevant characteristics on modern man

In this section, we will take a look at modern man, pointing out those characteristics that could be an obstacle to the process of holiness in the present and finally, we present our proposal, based on the Teresian experience. The development indicates that it is possible to propose to the people of our culture perspectives that distribute the action of God's grace, to be able to rediscover humility as walking in truth that leads to self-transcendence.

3.1.1. Superficiality of relationships

Let us now to fix our eyes on modern man, which is an important step in our journey as in so doing it will shade some light on the sort of dough to which the yeast of divine grace has to ferment today. A description of modern man would necessitate a rather comprehensive investigation, which is not within our means and objectives in this chapter. We will highlight only those elements that are important for our reflection and our theme. Highlighting the negative aspects of modern man does not necessarily indicate or imply a pessimistic overview, rather we believe in the human and spiritual possibilities of the person. Our aim is to identify only those outlooks that may hinder or prevent divine action.

Although it is true that the situation of modern man seems unflattering to the action of grace and therefore the path of holiness, we believe that even during these time limits, God

continues to sanctify men and women because He is the same yesterday, today and forever, and that He wants all men and women to come to the knowledge of the truth (Heb 13, 8, 1Tim 2, 4).

One of the issues that most resonates in any description of modern man is linked to the world of relationships. It is true that man has been and remains in a tangle of feelings, but today more than ever, the emotional world appears as mysterious, dense, complex and impenetrable, both for the same individual as well as for those around him. It is difficult to find today who will, aided by technology, show a deep desire for communication and meeting with others, but this does not necessarily desire for a firm and solid relationship. Man today is not necessarily looking for relationship as an opportunity to exercise his sacrificial capacity as an offer for the otherness; rather he is after the satisfaction which he may find in the other person. Hence, relationship becomes a nuisance and therefore manipulation whereby it is discarded when it no longer provides the expected satisfaction.

3.1.2. Consumerism: no interest in the truth

After getting rid of the domain of reason, modern man has also abandoned the discipline imposed on him thus delivering himself to the power of feelings. This has led him into an inner fragmentation that occurs in the exercise of his options: without realizing it, man obeys multiple logics, even contradictory³⁰⁸. His will is not strong enough to gather his thoughts and desires. His powers appear scattered without achieving unified, “y en lugar de un yo integrado aparece una pluralidad dionisiaca de personajes”³⁰⁹.

Living a hectic life, man tries to get away from anything that might cause him suffering and pain, and so takes refuge in the novelty, variety and new satisfactions. Each consists, according to tastes and colors, elements from which he wants to live, taking ideas from here and there, without worrying about a consistent result. It does not matter since in the contemporary world there are no absolute truths; ideas and opinions may change at any time and all manner of

³⁰⁸ “Nos encontramos en la actualidad con unas corrientes de pensamiento y de acción que de hecho plasman un hombre sin vocación, es decir un hombre que ni se plantea el sentido vocacional de su vida. El consumismo lleva a la pereza y a la falta de compromiso serio. Cambia de cosas (móvil, ordenador, etc...) creyendo que ya no es necesario cambiarse a sí mismo (T. Eliot). Anhela una libertad desligada de responsabilidad, derechos sin deberes...” (MANUEL SÁNCHEZ MONGE, *Animación vocacional en la vida consagrada*, Tabor 23(2014) 125.

³⁰⁹ L. GONZÁLEZ-CARVAJAL, *Ideas y creencias del hombre actual*, Sal Terrae, Santander1993³, 170.

personal ideas must be accommodated³¹⁰. However, this fragmentation does not provide him with fulfillment, rather on the contrary, he gets tired and disappointed.

Modern man leads a life that is tainted by alienation and therefore whenever mobbed by all these multiple needs, he is robbed off his freedom, obscuring his reason that prevents him from seeing his own reality as it is³¹¹. His desire to have fun, by avoiding any suffering, is a sign of his profound aspiration of happiness. However, loneliness, frustration and depression are more common today than at any other time³¹². A man who is broken from inside will hardly know the realities surrounding him nor will he find the need of enter into a relationship in a unique way of encounter with the (other) and therefore create room for self-transcendence.

3.2. Proposals for self-transcendence: openness to God's grace and the truth

Relying on the development of the previous chapters and proposals as outlined before, we will now proceed to propose to the current man avenues for developing a life that aspires to the greatest possible consistency with nature. As a human being, he should aim to live as such, internally and externally, taking responsibility for his own life, becoming protagonist of his own history and living in freedom as Teresa would, by deploying his full potential. In other words, become more a person.

A proposal with these nuances is an indisputable part of the process of humanization through which man ideally faces himself and assumes responsibility, determination and effort to build and be authentic; the result is a new and humble man. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the transformation that characterizes the humanization process also forms an inherent part of any process of sanctification. Hence, our proposal aims at helping modern man to take steps in view of a personal transformation that depends on him and in some way, preparing his nature to the action of grace.

³¹⁰ L. GONZÁLEZ-CARVAJAL, *Ideas y creencias del hombre actual*, o.c, 171.

³¹¹ E. RODEÑAS, *Thomas Merton: El hombre y su vida interior*, Narcea, Madrid 2010, 90.

³¹² “Cruzando solo el desierto, transportándose a sí mismo sin ningún apoyo trascendente, el hombre actual se caracteriza por la vulnerabilidad. La generalización de la depresión no hay que achacarla a las vicisitudes psicológicas de cada uno o a las ‘dificultades’ de la vida actual, sino a la deserción de la res pública, propenso a desfallecer o hundirse en cualquier momento, ante una adversidad que afronta a pecho descubierto, sin fuerza exterior. El hombre relajado está desarmado. De esta manera los problemas personales toman dimensiones desmesuradas y cuanto más se insiste, ayudado o no por los ‘psi’, menos se resuelven” (G. LIPOVETSKY, *La era del vacío. Ensayos sobre el individualismo contemporáneo*, Anagrama, Barcelona¹³ 2000, 46 - 47).

In addition, we will do based on the so-called “Cauces para la educación de la persona”³¹³, proposed by St. Teresa. We believe that the elements of the human condition today would have the same effect as they had nearly five centuries ago, and further that they are extremely useful for the end that we are pursuing here: providing man for action grace, which is silent and invisible. Just to add that our proposal consists of intuitions rather than certainties and concrete actions ought to follow. We would like to suggest an itinerary that man can roam freely, not following detailed and specific guidelines but looking carefully on his own way. We will begin by proposing the necessity for prayer as a gateway to relationship with God and with others, which is at the same time an essential element for human development from a Christian point of view, something that opens man to know who he is before God and before others.

3.2.1. First proposal: relationship with oneself, God and the others

Teresa is a woman made to enter into a relationship with God and with the others. Hence, the great ability that she shows in establishing links with people. This is explicit from the first years of her life in which she creates a kind of relational aura, which involves easily attracting people around her. In her youth, she begins ‘dangerously’ to draw attention of the people to the point that, to avoid disgrace, her father had to send her to the Monastery of *Santa Maria de Gracia*. Later on, the parlor of the Incarnation became the clearest example of the relational capacity for Teresa and her exquisite gift for people. The narrative of her autobiography presents a rich woman in humans and spiritual gifts, with a heavy emotional burden, enriched by her unique femininity³¹⁴. She narrates in *The Book of Life* the following:

“Más todavía deseaba no fuese monja, que éste no fuese Dios servido de dármele, aunque también temía el casarme. A cabo de este tiempo que estuve aquí, ya tenía más amistad de ser monja, aunque no en aquella casa, por las cosas más virtuosas que después entendí tenían, que me parecían extremos demasiados; y había algunas de las más mozas que me ayudaban en esto, que si todas fueran de un parecer, mucho me aprovechara. También tenía yo una grande amiga en otro monasterio, y esto me era parte para no ser monja, si lo hubiese de ser, sino

³¹³ M. HERRÁIZ GARCÍA, *Sólo Dios basta: Claves de la espiritualidad Teresiana*, o.c, 195.

³¹⁴ M. MARTÍN DEL BLANCO, *Teresa de Jesús. Su rostro humano y espiritual*, Monte Carmelo, Burgos 1999, 19.

adonde ella estaba. Miraba más el gusto de mi sensualidad y vanidad que lo bien que me estaba a mi alma” (V 3,2).

This capability for relationship is not without its difficulties. The young Teresa lived her emotional richness to the surface³¹⁵; in friendship, suffering and joy as well as in dominion³¹⁶. However, when she finally abandons herself in the hands of God, her qualities are enhanced and in her emerges the image of an even-finished woman who lives in simplicity and harmony and in the love of God and neighbor³¹⁷. She goes ahead and gains freedom in her relationships and in her way of loving without necessarily reducing her capacity to love, on the contrary she is an example of a love lived in freedom, something which gives her power.

For Teresa, genuine relationship should lead to freedom. Lovers who neither seek the growth of the other person nor are oriented to walk toward God are denied of freedom and they close themselves in or engage in purely sensual love; false relations rooted in sensuality are themselves a recipe for selfishness. Instead, relationships that seek the good of those who they love transcend what is purely external and value the interior of the other. Relationships ought to see the face of God in the neighbor, who gives dignity to the human person. Genuine friend help each other to grow by give life for each other and opening up to God because they are moving towards Him. The experience lived gives Teresa authority to teach about the relationship as a privileged place for love. For her, the human person must fight to escape from any relationship likely to remove freedom. Human love that has no theological horizon, that is, love that has nothing to do with God is not authentic and therefore ought to be rejected.

However, the relational capabilities in Teresa are important not only for the number of persons who she met, or discussed and enjoyed the delicious St. Teresa’s personality, but also and more importantly because the key elements of Teresa’s way of perfection process are understood in a relational atmosphere. Thus, for example, for Teresa as we expounded in the second chapter, prayer is lived as an encounter of friendship that implies a relationship with God, and has such human characteristics as openness, acceptance, listening or the need for joyful

³¹⁵ “...tenía una grandísima falta de donde me vinieron grandes daños, y era ésta: que como comenzaba a entender que una persona me tenía voluntad y si me caía en gracia, me aficionaba tanto, que me ataba en gran manera la memoria a pensar en él, aunque no era con intención de ofender a Dios, mas holgábame de verle y de pensar en él y en las cosas buenas que le veía. Era cosa tan dañosa, que me traía el alma harto perdida” (V 37, 4).

³¹⁶ M. HERRÁIZ GARCÍA, *Sólo Dios basta: Claves de la espiritualidad Teresiana*, o.c, 267.

³¹⁷ Id.

meeting with a friend. This is exercised through an environment of mutual trust and love between friends³¹⁸.

A prayer with these characteristics has two important benefits. The first is that it fosters the right climate for a process of self-knowledge. When the human person enters within himself through prayer, he begins to know the greatness and dignity that he possesses, at the same time, the dark places and vermin that try to prevent him continue on the path to the center of the castle. Prayer appears thus as ‘unveiling of masks’³¹⁹; revealing the truths of man and God³²⁰. Nevertheless, self-knowledge is given in a long process that reaches fulfillment when the relationship with God deepens; we only begin to know ourselves when we know Him³²¹, that is, in the light of the truth of God, the human being knows himself as well.

The second fruit or effect of prayer lived in friendship is that it promotes the process of inner transformation. The best evidence of the reality of this transformation is the life of Teresa herself³²². She admits that prayer was the engine of transformation. Teresa narrates on her life pointing out the novelty which had occurred in her from the exercise of prayer³²³. What she begins to write is a new book, in which she sings the harmony achieved as a result of the friendship with God. Moreover, as already above noted and is not repeated by others, the transformation occurs only when man feels accepted and loved in his poverty. From that feeling of welcome, one can see clearly the reality, accept and begin to change. Only what is accepted with love can be transformed. This climate of acceptance is inherent in the friendship.

Thus, from the experience and teaching of St. Teresa we can conclude that the encounter with the other is not only the way to encounter God, but a genuine relationship that fosters self-knowledge and authenticity, a process of transformation that is provided for through the action of the grace of God.

³¹⁸ “Y quien no la ha comenzado, por amor del Señor le ruego yo no carezca de tanto bien. No hay aquí que temer, sino que desear; porque, cuando no fuere adelante y se esforzare a ser perfecto, que merezca los gustos y regalos que a estos da Dios, a poco ganar irá entendiendo el camino para el cielo; y si persevera, espero yo en la misericordia de Dios, que nadie le tomó por amigo...” (V 8, 5).

³¹⁹ M. HERRÁIZ GARCÍA, *La oración, historia de amistad*, Editorial de Espiritualidad, Madrid 1981, 50.

³²⁰ “Esta es oración mental, hijas mías, entender estas verdades” (C 22, 8); Also: Cf. F 10, 13; V 21, 5.

³²¹ “...y a mi parecer jamás nos acabamos de conocer si no procuramos conocer a Dios” (1M 2, 9).

³²² “Miren lo que ha hecho conmigo...” (V 19, 15).

³²³ “Quiero ahora tornar adonde dejé de mi vida, que me he detenido, creo, más de lo que me había de detener, porque se entienda mejor lo que está por venir. Es otro libro nuevo de aquí adelante, digo otra vida nueva. La de hasta aquí era mía...” (V 23, 1).

a) Application: Relationship as an area of growth transcendence

The human being is relational because he enters into relationship with oneself, with others, with the cosmos and God; therefore, he is a being open to the world, to others, as he is social by nature. The humble person finds himself being responsible to the community.

“La profunda y rápida transformación de la vida exige con suma urgencia que no haya nadie que, por despreocupación frente a la realidad o por pura inercia, se conforme con una ética meramente individualista. El deber de justicia y caridad se cumple cada vez más contribuyendo cada uno al bien común según la propia capacidad y la necesidad ajena, promoviendo y ayudando a las instituciones, así públicas como privadas, que sirven para mejorar las condiciones de vida del hombre”³²⁴.

The humble person cannot be a slave in the world, denying his own dignity and abdicating his greatness³²⁵, nor being arrogant and insensible to the demands of the natural balance of the world; he ought to make an effort to be a humble administrator in the name of God, Who is the Only Lord of all, by whom all were created by Him (Gen 1, 28).

The human being forms part and parcel of the world, and at the same time he transcends it; therefore, the superiority which permits him to submit nature to satisfy his needs does not consist in despising and exploiting it indiscriminatively. Love as a spirit of self-surrender and of service drives the human person to battle the evils of the human condition of whatever kind: economical, political, cultural, national and international, and it does not permit him to be passive nor inoperative.

Therefore, man should not fail to communicate in order to fulfill the need for contact and relationships with others, since it is only in coming out to meet the other that makes him a concrete and real person. Furthermore, only man is capable of creating symbols, projections and dreams that, upon not finding the conditions of realization in the world, they lead him to

³²⁴ GS, 30.

³²⁵ “El hombre no puede renunciar a sí mismo, ni al puesto que le es propio en el mundo visible, no puede hacerse esclavo de las cosas, de los sistemas económicos, de la producción y de sus propios productos. Una civilización con perfil puramente materialista condena al hombre a tal esclavitud, por más que tal vez, indudablemente, esto suceda contra las intenciones y las premisas de sus pioneros. En la raíz de la actual solicitud por el hombre está sin duda este problema. No se trata aquí solamente de dar una respuesta abstracta a la pregunta: quién es el hombre; sino que se trata de todo el dinamismo de la vida y de la civilización. Se trata del sentido de las diversas iniciativas de la vida cotidiana y al mismo tiempo de las premisas para numerosos programas de civilización, programas políticos, económicos, sociales, estatales y otros muchos” (JUAN PABLO II, *Redemptoris hominis*, 16).

aspire to a transcendent reality itself³²⁶. Among all the beings in the universe, the human being is the only one who can transcend himself. Martín Velasco while talking about the traits of mystical experience says that the human person has to transcend himself to be able to unite with God in love. He writes:

“El hombre es, pues, un deseo radical, que se desgrana en los mil deseos concretos que mueven su vida, que no puede ser satisfecho con ninguna de las realidades mundanas. Por eso el hombre necesita trascenderse para poder realizarse. Y para trascenderse necesita superar los objetos de esos deseos concretos, ir más allá de todo lo que desea, dilatarse hasta el infinito para poder coincidir con el Absoluto desde el que existe”³²⁷.

Modern man has these features as part of his nature. In addition, although his relations tend to be superficial, deep down is the desire to find whoever really fills his life.

We cannot deny that it is difficult to ask modern man to establish a relational link in prayer as proposed by Teresa of Jesus³²⁸. However, here comes the core of our proposal, we can ask him to endeavor to establish and maintain strong and stable relations, links to help him grow as a person, that confront, which enlighten and help him out of oneself, to encounter the other. A genuine relationship, at the fostering of a climate of acceptance, which helps man become mature and regenerating area of the individual. Authentic relationship allows one to recognize and accept that there are situations and areas in life that can only be reconstructed soundly if only we let in other. Man reaches this point when he comes out of himself to open up to another in the process of self-transcendence

True friendship reveals the essential dimension of being human, and helps him to transcend himself and find in the other, the face of God. It is a friendship that brings people together on common ground, where there is mutual responsibility of give and take³²⁹ in any kind of difficulty and in an atmosphere of unconditional trust.

The important aspect of the relationship is manifested, for example, through the experience of falling in love. For the one who is in love, the only thing that matters is to be with

³²⁶ L. BOFF, *Tiempo de trascendencia. El ser humano como proyecto infinito*, Sal Terrae, Santander 2002², 42.

³²⁷ J. MARTÍN VELASCO, *Espiritualidad y mística*, S. M., Madrid 1994, 55.

³²⁸ “...que no es otra cosa oración mental - a mi parecer... sino tratar de amistad, estando muchas veces tratando a solas con quien sabemos nos ama” (V 8,5).

³²⁹ “Porque andan ya las cosas del servicio de Dios tan flacas, que es menester hacerse espaldas unos a otros los que le sirven para ir adelante” (V 7, 22).

the beloved; neither time nor sacrifice count. Meeting this need is so powerful that all undertakings are put aside which hinder the relationship. The key word in this type of friendship is ‘sharing between friends’, giving of oneself and engaging one’s life to Him³³⁰. Here, the language of love appears as a sign of what the beloved is for the Lover. His face glitters with the love of the divine. I am convinced that human relationships, in its truest and deepest sense, they are revitalizing through the process of humanization and therefore a door to self-transcendence.

We are talking of a situation in which the person recognizes the gift of the other, and God at work in this gift, it involves truly listening to the other. This a challenge for today to engage oneself in fostering reform from a stance of humility, that is, engagement moderated by a knowledge of self, which is nurtured in relational knowledge of God. Relational knowledge of God requires a commitment to prayer, a dimension of the ascetical practices.

3.2.2. Second proposal: Detachment - the truth will set you free

Once man is deprived of a proper formation in the ways of the spirit feels that it is possible to lead a life of double standards, that is, to pretending to strike a reconciliation between the relationship with God and a worldly lifestyle, whereby the person would keep on indulging in worldly desires at the same time serving God. Teresa recounts on her experience of fragmentation:

“Por una parte me llamaba Dios; por otra, yo seguía al mundo. Dábanme gran contento todas las cosas de Dios; teníanme atada las del mundo. Parece que quería concertar estos dos contrarios tan enemigo uno de otro como es vida espiritual y contentos y gustos y pasatiempos sensuales... y así no me podía encerrar dentro de mí (que era todo el modo de proceder que llevaba en la oración) sin encerrar conmigo mil vanidades” (V 7, 17).

For her, once freedom is removed or misunderstood, man becomes a slave of himself, and therefore he is unable to transcend himself³³¹. Jesus says if we desire to continue in His word, then that indicates that we are truly His disciples; and that we are disposed to know the truth, and that the truth will set us free (John 8, 32), man is capable of making himself the best

³³⁰ L. BOFF, *Tiempo de trascendencia. El ser humano como proyecto infinito*, o.c., 47.

³³¹ “Páreceme ahora a mí esta manera de caminar un querer concertar cuerpo y alma para no perder acá el descanso y gozar allá de Dios. Y así será ello si se anda en justicia y vamos asidos a virtud. Mas es paso de gallina. Nunca con él se llegará a la libertad de espíritu” (V 13, 5).

version he was created to be through the right employment of freedom³³². Therefore, from the experience of living this temptation man is challenged to arise from his slumber and encourage himself to walk on the path to freedom³³³. In between these two opposites, each person chooses whom he wants to follow and serve: God or the creatures; there is no other option. Whatever the choice, this will affect his life in entirety, that is, personal choices shape the person into whom he wants to be in freedom³³⁴, therefore, it is a call to personal responsibility.

If the person opts for engaging in a relationship with persons or property without reference to God as the source or end, he will sink into slavery and paralyze the entire process of humanization since the person grows humanly and spiritually in and through freedom. If on the other hand he chooses to maintain the Lord as his God, he will achieve true freedom, because being a slave of God ennobles man and makes him master of the world³³⁵.

Given this, Teresa proposes detachment as a means to attain freedom. For her, detachment is a great good and if it is well lived it becomes a foundation in the perfection of spiritual life³³⁶. For her, as we have pointed out, detachment does not mean standing empty, rather it is an option for God as the supreme value and truth of life; from Him everything is renovated with new assessment. This detachment consists of an option for God, according to which it makes Him the only good. As she understood it, detachment unifies all the forces of the person so that he focuses his appetites and yearnings to God. It is also worth bearing in mind that this virtue is prior to religious maturity. The force, therefore of this attitude in the view of St. Teresa, is in guiding all the desires and wishes of the person to God³³⁷.

Teresa proposes detachment of the person as a requirement that allows one to grow in love. Detachment is generated under the affective and effective freedom from creatures and oneself. It finds its meaning to the extent that it is path to the appropriating the person to

³³² “Somos en cierto sentido, nuestros padres: nos engendramos a nosotros mismos como queremos ser; mediante la elección, nos conformamos al modelo que hemos escogido” (GREGORIO DE NISA, *Sobre la vida de Moisés*, (Introducción, traducción y notas de LUCAS F. MATEO-SECO), Ciudad Nueva 1993, II, n. 3).

³³³ “No consintamos, oh hermanas, que sea esclava de nadie nuestra voluntad, sino del que la compró por su sangre” (C 4, 8).

³³⁴ M. HERRÁIZ GARCÍA, *Sólo Dios basta: Claves de la espiritualidad Teresiana*, o.c, 354.

³³⁵ “Porque cuando de veras está tocada el alma de este amor de Dios, sin pena ninguna se quita el que se tiene a las criaturas, digo de arte que esté el alma atada a ningún amor; lo que no se hace estando sin este amor de Dios; que cualquiera cosa de las criaturas, si mucho se aman, da pena; y apartarse de ellas, muy mayor. Como se apodera Dios en el alma, vala dando señorío sobre todo lo criado” (Cta. 177, 6; a *Don Lorenzo de Cepeda*, 17 de enero de 1577).

³³⁶ “Trata del gran bien que es desasirse de todo lo criado... vengamos al desasimiento que hemos de tener, porque en esto está el todo, si va con perfección” (C 8, 1).

³³⁷ “Ahora vengamos al desasimiento que hemos de tener, porque en esto está el todo si va con perfección... Porque abrazándonos con sólo el Criador y no se nos dando nada por todo lo criado...” (C 12, 1).

freedom. But above all, the person follows this path of detachment, because he feels loved by someone who fills his life: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14: 6). Hence, from this point the person who is unattached feels as if he is in heaven: “...se contenta sólo de contentar a Dios y no hace caso de contento suyo” (C 13, 7).

Detachment as an option for God and path to freedom is part of the whole process of holiness and not just an exercise for beginners. Hence, the believer walking on his journey on the spiritual path, if he is still tied to something without reference to God, he cannot surrender himself entirely to God nor is he disposed to welcome Him. He is neither free nor is he the master of himself and therefore his desires and wishes are scattered. Man does not achieve freedom without a constant struggle against what he wants to tie his heart to and prevent him from his surrender to God. The process of detachment presents a dying to live:

“Muera ya este yo, y viva en mí otro que es más que yo y para mí mejor que yo, para que yo le pueda servir. El viva y me dé vida; El reine, y sea yo cautiva, que no quiere mi alma otra libertad. ¿Cómo será libre el que del Sumo estuviere ajeno? ¿Qué mayor ni más miserable cautiverio que estar el alma suelta de la mano de su Criador? Dichosos los que con fuertes grillos y cadenas de los beneficios de la misericordia de Dios se vieren presos e inhabilitados para ser poderosos para soltarse” (E 17, 3).

Once his wishes and desires are purified and freedom gained, then the person is transformed according to the model of Christ, a Pauline language that Teresa will translate into an allegory of the silkworm. All this will lead man to achieve his vocation of freedom.

a) Application: Detachment: poverty opens man to the truth

Learning to be free against possessions is to enter into our own houses in order to listen with composure and to convert the voices of selfishness into love. Within us are the roots of all our attitudes and behaviors. The culture of image, pleasure and possessions that deform and enslave the mind requires of us the ability to discern. We have already noted that in the modern world, possessions situate or position man in society, and that the value of the person is defined in terms of possession: the more possession the greater the value he has. This common mentality makes it difficult for modern man to accept detachment as a way to live in freedom, in the midst of a consumer society that argues exactly the opposite: consumption and possession are inherent

to the exercise of freedom as doing what one wants. Thanks to the effectiveness of advertising, these ideas are deeply internalized in contemporary society, so man does not even remotely think of being detached from his property. He is free to possess whatever he desires.

However, the difficulty that we encounter in modern man with their pluses and minuses is the same as it was of the man of the Sixteenth Century, when it comes to motivating detachment. Hence, the radical nature of the proposals that Teresa proposes. For her, the human heart easily finds reasons to keep its tastes and fancies, thus the person will find a hard time taking a step to get rid of them. Indeed, when man does not seek to balance his appetite for possessions, he finds more and more demanding needs for satisfaction³³⁸. That is, the desire to own gains strength by controlling the person where upon he loses life and freedom. Therefore, detachment has the function to direct man towards freedom, rescuing and protecting the excessive desire to possess, and embracing the possession of God Himself, the complete freedom.

Material poverty embodies a crucial opportunity for man since it refers the human person to the truth of his own being, to his existential poverty. The human being by his own essence cannot do without the help, the love of neighbor, the capacity to be accomplished, of being saved and redeemed, especially from death. Thus in the exterior poverty, one can see an existential poverty: that, one is a beggar before God and before the rest. This material poverty ought to be deepened accepting the dependence on others, respect for others, and the dependence, which all have on God, in whom we have to entrust. Richness on the contrary easily seduces the person and moves him to feel secure in himself, to be owner of himself, closing himself in and not desiring to receive anything as a gift, fleeing from the truth that he is a human being³³⁹.

The Kingdom of God comes preferably only to the poor, to those who are insignificant and the needy. In Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God is manifested in poverty and frailty. The poverty of Christ encompasses the existential poverty of the human person until death. The arrival of the Kingdom of Christ produces an inversion of values: the values that were considered as more important assume the last place, whatever was unfruitful is made fruitful; wisdom of the

³³⁸ “Porque este cuerpo tiene una falta, que mientras más le regalan, más necesidades descubre. Es cosa extraña lo que quiere ser regalado...” (C 11, 2).

³³⁹ AQUINATA BÖCKMANN, *La pobreza piedra de toque de la vida religiosa*, Sal Terrae, 1983, 53.

world is like insanity before God; abundance is transmitted through detachment, through poverty; to rule means to put oneself into service of the others³⁴⁰.

We therefore find ourselves with an alienated man, who upon clinging himself to possessions narcissistically and increasingly closes the possibility of encounter with the 'other' and the 'Other', which at the same time determine his ability for solidarity and commitment to the common good, justice and equity³⁴¹.

After this preamble, from the Teresian experience and what the modern world presents to us, we can make a proposal open to anyone, regardless of their religious affiliation. Man today, as was five centuries ago, only will win an unattached heart when he finds a greater good for which to discard what he possesses. For the greater good Christians, the 'Hidden Treasure' is Christ or the Kingdom of God; that will help him a lot to embark on experiences of solidarity, aspirations to great goals and ideals, have great good desires and reasons for which struggle even a true love will be of great help.

All these shall provide him with means to free himself, which is the way of freedom, which implies in neither being attached to anybody nor to anything³⁴²: "No consintamos, oh hermanas! que sea esclava de nadie nuestra voluntad, sino del que la comproo por su sangre" (C 4, 8). It is as Juan Antonio Marcos puts it "el asimiento a cosas, personas o a sí mismo impiden cualquier actitud de entrega"³⁴³. If, as we have already noted it is impossible for modern man put this heart in Christ as the supreme value, as Teresa requests, if it is possible set his heart on ideals and projects that help him to change his assessment of things and free the heart of possession. At the end of the day, we remember that detachment is not dispossession but change of attitudes towards what is possessed.

Another idea that we believe to be significant is captured in the experiences in which man confronts his life with completely different realities which are contrasting with his, so that the reality of the 'other', being new to him, may challenge his relationship and assessment to goods. If this occurs then it is very possible that the path to freedom will be opened.

³⁴⁰ Ib., 54.

³⁴¹ "Se aliena el hombre que rechaza trascenderse a sí mismo y vivir la experiencia de la autodonación y de la formación de una auténtica comunidad humana, orientada a su destino último que es Dios. Está alienada una sociedad que, en sus formas de organización social, de producción y consumo, hace más difícil la realización de esta donación y la formación de esa solidaridad interhumana" (Juan Pablo II, Carta Encíclica Centesimus Annus (CA), 41).

³⁴² JUAN ANTONIO MARCOS, *Un viaje a la plenitud. El 'Camino de Perfección' de Teresa de Jesús*, o.c, 42.

³⁴³ Ib.

Just to mention an example, the so-called social action projects or volunteering, quite fashionable these days, provide the individual with the opportunity to make contact with realities totally different from his, and engage with them even temporarily. The experience of meeting the others who own less and yet are able to live happily, confront this volunteer with the reality of the possessor: maybe he owns too much and yet he does not have the happiness of ordinary people. Experiences like this provide man with a chance to look and challenge himself; to recognize the fact that happiness is not in the possession of goods. Perhaps this would mark the beginning of a path of detachment which is already mentioned, concerns the heart. We are confident that such projects can help modern man to direct his life to freedom. Here the most important thing is to be free.

b) Communion as openness to the others

Teresa knows that everyone has the vocation to interiority through the God who dwells in him and that each person also has a vocation to communion, through the social dimension which enables him to give himself for the love of neighbor. God created us for communion with Him in Christ, to identify ourselves with His feelings. However, this road towards self-identification is subject to variations, achievements, unthinkable and necessary ruptures; nevertheless each and every one of them is a road that leads to freedom.

Charity/love for Teresa means adopting with the others the attitude that characterized Jesus. From this point then the foundational reality of the pilgrim towards freedom emerges: The others, brothers and sisters are present in our way and love can open us to the otherness. In this respect four Teresian principles about love can help us:

That the root of love is God Himself: "...que si no es naciendo de raíz del amor de Dios, que no llegaremos a tener con perfección el del prójimo" (5M 3.9); that the Teacher of love is Christ: "oh precioso amor, que va imitando al capitán del amor, Jesús, nuestro bien" (C. 6,9); the attitudes of life are a reflection of love and that God wants works/deeds: "obras quiere el Señor; y que si ves una enferma a quien puedes dar algún alivio, no se te de nada perder esa devoción y te compadezcas de ella; y si tiene algún dolor, te duela a ti" (5M 3,11-12); that love carries with it the seal of the Cross: "porque si le ven torcer el camino, luego se lo dicen, o alguna falta porque cobra interés por el otro y su crecimiento. Digo traen bien pesada la cruz" (C 4, 7). This implies that as Christ becomes a neighbor to us through self-giving, so we become neighbors to

one another. Thus, through His example we are able to forge a way of solidarity with one another as members of His own body. "... humility frees the person to see through distortions; [since we] are indebted to God, who gives salvation neither out of love nor in merit"³⁴⁴.

This would serve as an accompaniment proposal which could be offered to modern man, in order to keep on walking, growing, seeking and finding freedom which is the gift and task and that many people today are seeking, which many prisoners of a society of doubtful freedoms does not know how to satisfy a relentless, restless and thirsty heart in search for truth.

3.2.3. Third proposal: Desire for authenticity

Teresa grew in an atmosphere of authenticity³⁴⁵ that created favorable conditions for her such that very early in life it begun to wake up in her the truth as value and virtue³⁴⁶. After the crisis of adolescence, in which dominates the scattering she reappeared on the scene on theme of truth, but with such striking connotations that will transform Teresa into a passionate seeker of authenticity and truth, to the point that no sacrifice save one in order to reach the light³⁴⁷.

Teresa is an authentic woman. The nuns of the Incarnation knew that perfectly; that Teresa was a mature woman, which is shown by truth and where there is no 'hidden cobweb'³⁴⁸. Nevertheless, she is the only one who knows the truth: it falls short in her dealings and faithfulness to God. She carries authenticity in her blood, but she knew that her relationship with God did not respond authentically as she would have wanted to³⁴⁹. Hence, her spiritual journey was marked by the struggle between her desire for authenticity and weakness. Only from total abandonment in the hands of God, will she live authenticity as a generous response to His love.

³⁴⁴ DEBORAH WALLACE RUDDY, *Christian humility and democratic citizenry: St. Augustine and Jacques Maritain*, in: *Reassessing the Liberal State: Reading Maritain's Man and the State*, (Ed. T. FULLER, J. HITTINGER), Washington, D.C 2001, 209.

³⁴⁵ "Era (su padre) de gran verdad. Jamás nadie le vio jurar ni murmurar. Muy honesto en gran manera" (V 1, 1).

³⁴⁶ "En pronunciar esto mucho rato era el Señor servido me quedase en esta niñez imprimido el camino de la verdad" (V 1, 5).

³⁴⁷ "Siempre he procurado buscar quién me dé luz" (V 10, 8).

³⁴⁸ "Este no me tener por tan ruin venía que, como me veían tan moza y en tantas ocasiones y apartarme muchas veces a soledad a rezar y leer, mucho hablar de Dios, amiga de hacer pintar su imagen en muchas partes y de tener oratorio y procurar en él cosas que hiciesen devoción, no decir mal, otras cosas de esta suerte que tenían apariencia de virtud..." (V 7, 2).

³⁴⁹ "Buscaba remedio; hacía diligencias; mas no debía entender que todo aprovecha poco si, quitada de todo punto la confianza de nosotros, no la ponemos en Dios. Deseaba vivir, que bien entendía que no vivía, sino que peleaba con una sombra de muerte, y no había quien me diese vida, y no la podía yo tomar; y quien me la podía dar tenía razón de no socorrerme, pues tantas veces me había tornado a Sí y yo dejádole..." (V 8, 12).

Further, for Teresa authenticity is closely related to other fundamental approaches in the development/transformation of human person and in the process of sanctification. Authenticity is palpable to the truth, as we have already hinted, but also in self-knowledge and humility. One leads to the other and mutually attracts each other.

Personal knowledge, widely developed in our second chapter, involves in every human being, the search for the deepest identity; to the extent that the human person exercising on it owns himself and learns to self. It involves knowledge of self, both one's greatness as created in the image of God, and one's limitations in the tendency to self-centeredness. Such self-knowledge acquired through relational knowledge of God results in humility, and humility nurtures charity. Charity moves persons to serve others. Thus, personal choices and decisions are crucial as they spring from the self. Such is the importance that Teresa attaches to the knowledge of oneself; self-knowledge should be the daily food of the believer³⁵⁰.

Personal knowledge, lived in prayer conceived as friendship, is fundamental as it leads to truth. Moreover, the first truth revealed by an authentic prayer is God's truth and the truth about oneself. The human being possesses greatness and dignity that comes from God, being his creation³⁵¹ to being created in His image and likeness³⁵², to be inhabited by Him³⁵³, and to be called by God to unite himself with Him³⁵⁴. However, self-knowledge also reveals to the human person his poverty, little loyalty and tendency to depart from its Creator. At this point, as we have seen, in an original way Teresa associated humility and truth. For her, humility is to recognize and praise the greatness and absolute gratuitousness of God's love and welcome it as it really is, free love; and simultaneously accept its own and inability poverty³⁵⁵. This recognition leads man to live authentically.

Self-knowledge, as a search for authenticity, permits the discovery of identity and the deeper truth, and therefore the meaning and direction of one's existence. Self-knowledge and

³⁵⁰ "Y aunque esto del conocimiento propio jamás se ha de dejar, ni hay alma, en este camino, tan gigante que no haya menester muchas veces tornar a ser niño y a mamar...; porque no hay estado de oración tan subido, que muchas veces no sea necesario tornar al principio, y en esto de los pecados y conocimiento propio, es el pan con que todos los manjares se han de comer, por delicados que sean, en este camino de oración, y sin este pan no se podrían sustentar..." (V 13, 15).

³⁵¹ "...siempre tengamos memoria que tenemos de Dios el ser y que nos crió de nonada y que nos sustenta y todos los demás beneficios..." (V 10, 5).

³⁵² "Él mismo dice que nos crió a su imagen y semejanza. Pues si esto es así, como lo es, no hay para qué nos cansar en querer comprender la hermosura de este castillo..." (1M 1.1).

³⁵³ "No es otra cosa el alma del justo sino un paraíso adonde dice Él tiene sus deleites..." (1M 1. 1).

³⁵⁴ "Con ser de natural tan rica y poder tener su conversación no menos que con Dios..." (1M 1. 6).

³⁵⁵ C. GARCÍA, *Santa Teresa de Jesús. Nuevas claves de lectura*, o.c, 1998, 118.

truth, lived under a prayerful experience, engender commitment to life of simplicity, authentic and transparent life that at the same time recognize the greatness of God and his own littleness.

a) Application: authenticity is faithfulness to the truth

We noted how the quest for authenticity brought Teresa to find truth herself, which opened the doors for the encounter with the Divine Truth. A passion for authenticity, just like the one Teresa lived, entails having the courage to be and not only look; courageously confronted countercurrent to the surroundings, in the desire to be faithful to the truth itself. In addition, we are not talking about an ephemeral subjective truth, but a truth that comes from the human condition, its deepest nature of the human being inviting him to recognize that he is a being himself that created for the others, for relationship. If the human person indulges in fidelity against the truth, it becomes a challenge for him, which when honestly assumed illuminates life³⁵⁶, and although he may not realize it, it opens his heart to transcendence.

Maybe we cannot ask the modern man to make long hours of prayer; many do not understand or accept a proposal of this nature. But if for Teresa the search for authenticity and truth was way to the encounter with God, then we can ask modern man to strive for being himself, being authentic in the midst of a society of ‘deceptive truths’ and changes as accelerated almost do not allow one assess the proposals that is harassing him. The inauthentic man lives from others and not from the bottom of himself; led by others, acts without assuming personal and originally his vital project, but allowing it to drag the constraints of society. An existence lived this way loses value.

Our proposal is a call to live our own truth, a truth with the above-mentioned characteristics. A call to authenticity as a true vocation that is not from the outside but in the most authentic self within us: the profound sameness of our being, which invites us to live our true identity. Only in trying to be faithful to the truth itself that is inside, can the man of today avoid being a slave to the transient, to the so popular ‘throwaway culture’ of the superficial relationships that fragment inside and out. Truth gives freedom, and whoever puts his life on it, he knows it or not, accepts God as irreplaceable foundation of human life³⁵⁷.

³⁵⁶ J. BARRENA SÁNCHEZ, *El rostro humano de Teresa de Ávila*, Sígueme, Salamanca 1982², 116.

³⁵⁷ *Ib.*, 123.

Authenticity develops our identity in clear opposition to a style of life alienated and oppressive, and it is a moral imperative for man. A lifetime of healthy autonomy, authenticity and truth³⁵⁸, is a response to the personal nature that cries out for fullness. If man is persevering in his search for authenticity and truth, he will find the path of light, the path that leads to God.

b) Self-knowledge and reconciliation

Spiritual disciplines can prepare one to receive the gift of humility but one cannot command it, only pray to remain open to it. Modern man can benefit from Teresa's view of humility, provided that this virtue is viewed in a broader lay context of the circumstances of today. To put this virtue in practice is to assume a counter-cultural stance against a status quo that encourages arrogance, pride and self-aggrandizement at the expense of other; "live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited" (Rom 12, 16).

Humble persons see "themselves, their families and their nation as unexceptional when viewed in the light of God's greatness and the world's magnificence"³⁵⁹. Modern man finds himself surrounded and entangled in a world rife with conflict. In this case humility acts a wakeup call which points him towards the necessity of getting engaged in charitable acts of forgiveness and reconciliation. This attitude ought to be guided by the person on the part of God:

"Que una cosa tan grave y de tanta importancia como que nos perdone nuestro Señor nuestras culpas, que merecían fuego eterno, se nos perdone con tan baja cosa como es que perdonemos. Y aun de esta bajeza tengo tan pocas que ofrecer, que de balde me habéis, Señor, de perdonar"(C 36, 2).

For Teresa, there exists a similarity of disproportion between the pardon that the human being receives from God and the one he extends to his neighbor. In effect, the truth of contemplative union ought to be demonstrated in the ease of forgiving offenses, the capacity of going beyond the feelings and the points of honor; in few words, in the humility of forgiveness. In the disposition for receiving the gift of contemplation, on talking of the preoccupation of being

³⁵⁸ "Lo 'natural' frente a lo 'artificial' y la 'llaneza' frente a la 'afectación': en santa Teresa hay una enorme sinceridad de vida, una sinceridad absoluta podríamos afirmar" (JUAN ANTONIO MARCOS, *Teresa de Jesús. La transparencia del misterio*, o.c, 20).

³⁵⁹ ELIZABETH A. DREYER, *Humility*, o.c, 349.

honored, of the appetite of excellence, the desire of being above the others, Teresa has demonstrated up to what extent that could destroy fraternal communion and progress in freedom of spirit³⁶⁰.

By living in the truth about oneself and one's world, one cultivates a humility that knows the gifts and miseries of others, responds in compassion and does great things because one's surety is in God as Teresa would say: "¡Oh, cuándo será aquel dichoso día, en que te has de ver sumergido en aquel mar infinito de la Suma Verdad, donde ya no serás libre para pecar, ni lo querrás ser, porque estarás seguro de tu miseria, naturalizado con la vida de Dios" (E 17). "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Mat.11, 29). Life in many ways is a journey from pride and ignorance of the transcendent to humility and openness to the Transcendent through living in harmony and reconciliation with fellow human beings.

c) Journey towards the centre, the interior castle

It is necessary that modern man consider his soul as a whole castle or of very clear crystal; whereby the principal is situated in the middle and where God dwells. Teresa knows the reality of the human being; she believes in the human being with his potentials and limitations, she dreams of man and woman in God's plan and that he is merciful when one returns after he has lost the way³⁶¹. Man is a sacred creature, because he opens himself up to the abyss of God. This symbol underscores and indicates the infinite pretension of being the interior castle capable of knowing God. Man therefore is not alone "veo secretos en nosotros mismos que me traen espantada muchas veces. ¡Y cuántos más debe haber!" (4M 2.5); "jamás nos acabamos de conocer si no procuramos conocer a Dios" (1M 2.9).

In God, man is capable of recognizing his own identity, the mystery of his freedom, the depth and breadth of his desirous infinity. The clarity of the diamond and of the mirror³⁶² speak

³⁶⁰ JEAN-MARIE LAURIER, *Andar en humildad*, o.c, 312.

³⁶¹ "Y tomé todo el daño de una parienta que trataba mucho en casa. Era de tan livianos tratos... y de natural y alma virtuosa no me dejó casi ninguna. Estaba en el camino un hermano de mi padre, muy avisado y de grandes virtudes, viudo, a quien también andaba el Señor disponiendo para sí, que en su mayor edad dejó todo lo que tenía y fue fraile y acabó de suerte que creo goza de Dios. Quiso que me estuviese con él unos días" (V 3 - 4).

³⁶² "Estando una vez en las Horas con todas, de presto se recogió mi alma, y parecióme ser como un espejo claro toda, sin haber espaldas ni lados ni alto ni bajo que no estuviese toda clara, y en el centro de ella se me representó Cristo nuestro Señor, como le suelo ver. Parecióme en todas las partes de mi alma le veía claro como en un espejo, y también este espejo yo no sé decir cómo se esculpía todo en el mismo Señor por una comunicación que yo no sabré decir, muy amorosa... Díóseme a entender que estar un alma en pecado mortal es cubrirse este espejo de gran niebla

of the mystery of the transparent consciousness and clear reflection of the world, of himself and where he can see and find the valuable, recent and beautiful diamond footprints of the printed image God. The image of God is Jesus Christ, man's absolute Project. In the symbol of the interior castle, there is a proposal which Teresa wishes to teach modern man not only to understand himself, but also to face the awful ghosts of his interiority and face his way to standing before God accompanied by Christ. Being not only before, but also with God, to talk, to surrender himself into His wonderful attraction, falling into His center of gravity is to arrive at final dwelling place of the restless man.

Based on the conviction that the human being is a being inhabited by God, He extends towards a relationship with God who calls him from within, from the depths of his own being. It is crucial to consider the human soul as a whole castle of a diamond or of very clear crystal, where there are many mansions, just as in heaven there are many mansions; whereby the principal mansion is situated in the center of them all, in which things of great secret take place between God and the soul (1M1, 1-3).

This reality of the human beings, of being creatures made in the image and likeness of God (Gen1:27), like a castle is what we call interiority force from deep within ourselves and helps us to our self-discovery. It is to this world where we must enter, says Teresa, in order to realize the true wealth and greatness that it contains:

“Más habéis de entender que va mucho de estar a estar; que hay muchas almas que se están en la ronda del castillo, que es a donde están los que le guardan y que no se les da nada de entrar dentro ni saben que hay en aquel tan precioso lugar ni quién está dentro ni aún que piezas tiene” (1M 1,5).

The foundation of the way of accompaniment is in the first place, to know our personal reality in order to get out of the self for the search of God, since if we do not know who we are we would not know what are looking for and we can certainly lose our own selves. This human necessity to know who we are is an existential reality which makes it possible to grow and mature in our history. That makes us like Teresa, ask ourselves the existential questions: Who

y quedar muy negro, y así no se puede representar ni ver este Señor, aunque esté siempre presente dándonos el ser. Y que los herejes es como si el espejo fuese quebrado, que es muy peor que oscurecido. Es muy diferente el cómo se ve, a decirse, porque se puede mal dar a entender. Mas hame hecho mucho provecho y gran lástima de las veces que con mis culpas oscurecí mi alma para no ver este Señor” (V 40, 5).

am I? Where do I center the search for myself? What aspects give more importance? She proposes as a basis for search and knowledge of God, self-knowledge, but the the experience of Teresa is not based solely on self-knowledge, rather in discovering the God who gives life, dignity and beauty to the person, because: “Jamás nos acabamos de conocer, si no procuramos conocer a Dios” (1M 2, 9).

There in the depths lies the mystery of man, to know that he is created by God and to live the life of God through participation, or to discover the life within him as a free life offered by God, who gives him the dignity of his being. This is the real quest: to find in the center of our being the same life that is God because;

“...no es pequeña lástima y confusión que, por nuestra culpa, no entendamos a nosotros mismos, ni sepamos quién somos. ¿No sería gran ignorancia, hijas mías, que preguntasen a uno quién es y no se conociese ni supiese quién fue su padre ni su madre ni de qué tierra? Pues si esto sería gran bestialidad... Más, qué bienes puede haber en esta alma o quién está dentro en esta alma o el gran valor de ella, pocas veces lo consideramos; y así se tiene en tan poco procurar con todo cuidado conservar su hermosura...” (1M 1, 2).

In Teresa’s writings, we find a God who teaches in His Word and who always draws towards communion with the human beings. The God who dwells within is anxious that man captures His presence, His call, His loving whistle, His look of love and mercy³⁶³. It is in the experience of the loving gaze/look where dialogue and vocational certainty are woven, where the foundational questions of the meaning of life are answered³⁶⁴. The look constitutes in the essence of self-knowledge, looking at him and letting the Lord to at the person so that personal truth becomes a generous self surrender: “...sino ponerse en soledad y mirarle dentro de sí y no extrañarse de tan buen huésped” (C 28,2). Looking is to enter into reality and to be aware of its challenges. The experience of Teresa confronts us with a woman who knew how to enter into the events of the day with a clear and penetrating gaze, allowing herself to be touched by them and

³⁶³ “Mas que no se canse siempre en andar a buscar esto, sino que se esté allí con Él, acallado el entendimiento. Si pudiere, ocuparle en que mire que le mira, y le acompañe y hable y pida y se humille y regale con Él, y acuerde que no merecía estar allí. Cuando pudiere hacer esto, aunque sea al principio de comenzar oración, hallará grande provecho, y hace muchos provechos esta manera de oración; al menos hallóle mi alma. No sé si acierto a decirlo. Vuestra merced lo verá. Plega al Señor acierte a contentarle siempre, amen” (V 13, 22).

³⁶⁴ “No os pido ahora que penséis en Él ni que sequéis muchos conceptos ni que hagáis grandes y delicadas consideraciones con vuestro pensamiento; no os pido más de que le miréis” (C 26, 3).

act according to the state of her life³⁶⁵. This involves a commitment to walk with the eyes fixed on reality, knowing the actual situations, not being indifferent, knowing that there is a personal answer that nobody will give him; but rather that he will have to answer it himself.

Concluding on these aspects, we have been examining the condition of the actual man in regards to those elements that he considers valuable and those that have stand out to be obstacles in the very process of perfection or transcendence, some of which we have enumerated as an exaggerated self-affirmation, the zeal for self-sufficiency, autonomy and independence from everything, including God. We have presented our proposals, as means that could be employed to counter this process of self-disintegration and convert it in a process of self-discovery based on the Teresian experience. We presented our proposal as a walk in truth that leads to self-transcendence.

Modern man needs to stop and look at himself due to the circumstances in which he finds himself. We have indicated that in the sphere of relationship in which the human person needs to go beyond himself involves a dedication for the otherness; God and neighbor. However, these relationships remain intermingled with feelings, emotions in a world that appears as mysterious, dense, complex and impenetrable, both for the same individual as well as for those around him. This situation is complicated further by technology, which reduce his capacity of communication and meeting with others. Thus relationships are threatened by the search for self-satisfaction, thus reducing his sacrificial capacity; hence, a nuisance and therefore manipulation. Nevertheless, modern man needs to wake up to the challenge and discover the true reality of himself in the light of God and by discovering the same God in the face of his neighbor. Teresa proposes prayer to man of every generation as a process of true friendship, in which once each of the persons involved opens up to the other, they are transformed in love and begin to see each other in a new light. It involves an authentic friendship of equals; if modern man could take God for a friend, he would transcend himself in God's light and love.

Connected to the lack of authenticity at the realm of friendship is the lack of freedom in discovering self-truth by leading a life of double standards that is, pretending to reconcile a relationship with God and worldly lifestyle, whereby the person keeps on indulging on worldly desires in a world of consumerism. We discovered that, for Teresa, once freedom misunderstood,

³⁶⁵ “Estáse ardiendo el mundo, quieren tornar a sentenciar a Cristo... No es tiempo hermanas mías, no es tiempo de tratar con Dios negocios de poca importancia” (C1, 5).

man becomes a slave of himself, and therefore he is unable to transcend himself. Nevertheless, man cannot lead an authentic life through double standards: one has to decide and whatever the choice will affect his life in entirety, that is, personal choices shape the person into whom he wants to be in freedom therefore, it is a personal responsibility. True freedom comes through valuing God as the ultimate good over material goods. Given this, with Teresa we have proposed detachment as a means to attain freedom.

Finally, we have proposed self-knowledge, as a search for authenticity that permits the discovery of identity and the deeper truth, and therefore the meaning and direction of one's existence, which once lived well, engender commitment to life of simplicity, authentic and transparent life that at the same time one recognizes the greatness of God and his own littleness. It is a call to live personal truth as a true vocation that is not from the outside but in the most authentic self within man, the profoundness of our being, which invites us to live our true identity. Only in trying to be faithful to the truth itself that is inside, can the man of today avoid being a slave to the transient, to the so popular 'throwaway culture' of the superficiality.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to attempt to examine the theme of humility in St. Teresa of Jesus, which also happens to be a profound knowledge of and insight into the spiritual virtues that help to build the foundations of the spiritual journey; *walking in the truth* and *self knowledge*. Teresa emphasizes their importance because they are not only the foundation for a spiritual life but, in fact, are indispensable for the journey to God. Furthermore, she also believes that there are three necessary prerequisites to succeed in prayer. The first is to love one another, the second is detachment from all created things, and the third is humility. Whoever does not know himself, therefore does not live in the truth, he is condemned to make mistakes in his own assessment. A times he will fall into pride when he overvalues his qualities; on the other hand he may fall in despair, believing that his errors are irreparable. Dominated by the law of the pendulum, he will go from one extreme to another, and what is worse his oscillating way of life will not allow him to assume personal responsibility. Based on what has been carried out in our research we would like to make the following conclusions:

From the first chapter, we recall that from all the readings and sermon that Teresa would have had access to we can conclude that perhaps it is possible, from this view point to say that in the field of spirituality there would be two proposals to achieve personal knowledge: first, it proposes a path of self-knowledge through a process of internalization in prayer; this outlook has representatives from the Church Fathers such as, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Benedict among others. The second proposal, more inclined to the moral and psychological, would have to be the parents and representatives of the desert, the majority of spiritual from XVI and XVII century to Eastern monks. In the case of Teresa, the moral self-knowledge emerges as a result of the encounter with God in prayer and meditation.

The question of humility is a theme addressed in the entire writing and teaching of St. Teresa of Jesus. The interior experience exhibited by her autobiography and relations, the exhortation of the way of perfection, the testimony transmitted by the interior castle, the relation with her letters, foundations as well as her short writings give such a dynamic and positive view; which is at the same underscore a theology profoundly founded in this Christian virtue, which is many a times misinterpreted and rejected.

From the second chapter, which has assumed a wide margin compared to the other two has sought to make the following conclusions: We talked about walking in the truth and self-knowledge: in the mind of Teresa these two terms are closely linked, because a relationship with God can only be based on the solid foundation of truth, the result of self-knowledge that Teresa practices is achieved through the practice of prayer and meditation. If there is no self-knowledge and truth, therefore will not be the possibility of relationship. From there Teresa's insistence that self-knowledge is the result of an encounter with the truth must always be the foundation of the relationship with God throughout the spiritual process, which actually extends throughout life.

According to the more traditional dimension of silent acceptance of humiliations, rejection of honors and domination over the other people, of entire availability to God's will and to the service of neighbor, the Teresian humility emerges positively as a virtue of accomplishment of the person, of his vocation to the communion with God, to the imitation of Christ and to fraternity with the rest. Effectively, Teresa managed to transform the negative aspect of humility in an impressive disposition which points towards contemplative union with God, through communion in the mystery of Christ's passion and a force of cohesion and solidarity in the Christian community.

Teresa's struggle against deformation of humility, her search and concept of humility translate in an optimism and joy that cannot be but contribute to the rehabilitation of the Christian humility. Thus in this sense, it would be offensive to separate moral spirituality from the spiritual experience of theological reflection. The saints and the doctors of the church know how to demonstrate the splendor of grace in man and the goodness of the virtues that are proportionate his accomplishment of the only Christian and divine vocation. A morality of grace and virtues cannot but cooperate with the authentic spiritual experience.

Humility for Teresa is a complete and trusting acceptance of the truth of my present, a grasp of the reality of self and of circumstances. Its key is self-knowledge, which means knowing who I am in the here and now, not just with an emphasis on my faults, but also with recognition of my abilities, goodness, and potential. It also means acceptance of the circumstances of my life, the limitations, my failures, the weaknesses of others. Whereas charity involves one's disposition toward the self, and detachment involves one's disposition toward the future, humility involves one's disposition toward the "now," the real present. Teresa tells us that this path of humility is a path toward freedom; it is the most important virtue.

As a just evaluation of sin, awareness of the gifts received from God, the sense of the disproportion between what God does in the heart and in the human existence, and what the human person can and should do to incorporate or accept God's grace, humility culminates in the appreciative attribution of whichever gift, value or good works, to God as the permanent source and fount and in the attribution of whatever sort of sin and deficiency, fragility and insecurity, to the free responsibility of the human person and his wounded nature.

Instead, self-knowledge, as Teresa usually calls it gives the possibility to be oneself and to find one's own truth. In this way we can understand her profound devotion and personal friendship with those saints who after leading a life error knew their own truth, which caused the transformation of their lives: Augustine, Mary Magdalene and Paul, these are for Teresa icons of transformation from the encounter with the truth; from which moment their lives are recreated. Thus self-knowledge would be for Teresa the encounter with own truth, which is manifested through a life of authenticity.

Human relationship without authenticity should not be considered a relationship. Authenticity must be present even in the look which the person directs to himself; his profound 'I'. Otherwise to interact with the self would not be healthy nor would it be enriching. Similarly, relationship with the other, if he wants to be solid and stable, must be based on authenticity, which is the result of acceptance and personal knowledge of each of the protagonists. Therefore, I think that relationship with God cannot be otherwise. Moreover, the authenticity which requires a relationship of such caliber is of much higher quality.

This theme assumes such importance in the mind of Teresa that if it is unworthy of a human being to make no effort to know their origin, not knowing oneself is much more serious and without comparison. Self-knowledge appears for Teresa as a means of discovery and awareness of reality itself, which, instead of confining the individual himself, opens to otherness and transcendence, of the mystery of God. Thanks to self-knowledge, the human being can know his misery and littleness, which are part of its truth. Forgetting or closing one's eyes to this aspect involves, in the mind of Teresa, a real danger. Man must know his weaknesses and strengths, as we would say today. For Teresa, humility and self-knowledge are ultimately intertwined one and the same. She emphasizes that it is by cultivating humility that one becomes willing to look critically and consciously at one's self, and to acknowledge one's weaknesses, as well as one's strengths. It is an invitation to discover a more authentic self. It is necessary to

know and live in the truth: knowing it capacitates us to leave our comfort zones to a life of availability to the others by participating in their well being.

Due to this availability one can humbly ask for help to understand and see the truth, as well as enabling others to correct him if necessary. Humility makes us face and know our own limited reality; our successes, history, values, which enable us to know what we are capable of. To embody or express in our lives the truth, humility should be accompanied by other virtues such as love, faith, hope, detachment, perseverance, which are companions in the way of spiritual growth. Humility in its entirety embraces all these other virtues, all which cannot be authentic virtues if they lack it in the background.

We have enumerated how self-knowledge helps us to know the truth and live in it. It is a 'precondition' to make us come in contact with the truth. As Tomás Álvarez says humility is the Teresian Socratic call; that is, it involves knowing and acceptance of oneself. It is the precondition, the fundamental assumption of authenticity, beauty and truth of all virtues. This humility is reflected in the recognition of our limitations, recognizing in the first place, our cognitive limitations. It means acceptance of one's ignorance. Thus, it is a kind of willingness to accept the truth and submit to it; this can be done in two ways: either confirming or changing and correcting prior knowledge.

In the last chapter, we highlighted that love, understood as the construction of healthy and strong relationships, detachment as a path of freedom, and humility as search for truth itself, are virtues as valid for man of the XXI century as they were for the people of the XVI century. This is because they point to his very being, and therefore are able to promote the transformation of people from their roots, because the move to live in accordance with their own nature, even without any religious reference. The ideas mentioned lead us to conclude that on the contrary this is not a closed study. We believe it could become the motivation for further research to address critical issues that may have come out throughout our research.

We proposed self-knowledge, as a search for authenticity which permits the discovery of identity and the deeper truth, and therefore the meaning and direction of one's existence, which once lived well, engender commitment to life of simplicity, authentic and transparent life that at the same time one recognizes the greatness of God and his own littleness. It is a call to live personal truth as a true vocation that is not from the outside but in the most authentic self within man, the profoundness of our being, which invites us to live our true identity. Only in trying to

be faithful to the truth itself that is inside, can the man of today avoid being a slave to the transient, to the so popular 'throwaway culture' of the superficiality.

We looked at the man of today and we underscore his potential difficulties in view of the process of holiness. Only at the end, we pointed a number of highly valuable elements of modern man and that would be important to consider in future studies related to our theme. We believe these values and let us call them so, are true signs of the times, and therefore the place of the manifestation of God and encounter with Him.

For example, a study on the phenomenon of tolerance of modern man as a being of dialogue in search of truth and its relationship to the development of the person; a study on personal experience as a place of expression and openness to the transcendent; a study on respect for the rights of others as a way of meeting with transcendence, among others. It could be a research to provide illumination on the theme of the opening of the modern man to the action of God's grace and also the 'new' ways with which God continues to manifest Himself in order to attract his children to Himself.

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