



PROFILE IN FAITH



Mother Teresa: Holiness in the Dark

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This article originally appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of *Knowing & Doing*.

*The men of the East may spell the stars,
And times and triumphs mark,
But the men signed of the cross of Christ
Go gaily in the dark.*

*Night shall be thrice night over you,
And heaven an iron cope.
Do you have joy without a cause,
Yea, faith without a hope?*

G.K. Chesterton, *The Ballad of the White Horse*

*Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the
word of his servant? Let him who walks in the
dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the
Lord and rely on his God. (Isaiah 50:10)*

There is a problem in the life of holiness that for many does not arise at all, for some emerges intermittently, but for a certain number—more, I suspect, than ever acknowledge it in any public way—is virtually lifelong. It is the problem of *felt abandonment by God*, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, within the frame of full commitment to God: in other words, the desolation and seeming desolation of the deeply devoted. The case of Mother Teresa, founder of the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta in 1950 and their leader till her death in 1997 at the age of 87, has recently highlighted this perplexing reality, and the easiest way to present the problem is to review her story.

Darkness: the Personal Distress

Born Gonxha Agnes Bojaxhiu in Skopje, Yugoslavia (now part of the Republic of Macedonia), she loved

Jesus and wanted to be a missionary from a very early age. At 18 she left for Ireland to join the Sisters of Loreto, an education-oriented community whose work in India she hoped to share. She went to Calcutta as a Loreto Sister the following year, 1929. She became a nun, Sister Mary Teresa (later, as head of a missionary order, Mother Mary Teresa) in 1931. She took the name Teresa from St. Therese of Lisieux. In 1946, so she reported, Jesus Christ her Lord called her into slum work. “Come be my light” to the sick, the dying, beggars and street children, was what she was sure he was saying to her. She was given permission to start, and did so alone, though others joined her before long. She became a household word in the West through Malcolm Muggeridge’s film and book about her, both titled, in a phrase that she herself originated, *Something Beautiful for God* (1969, 1971), and in 1979 she received the Nobel Peace Prize. Fast-tracked upon her death for official Catholic sainthood, she was beatified by Pope John Paul II (that is, given the title Blessed) in 2003. This was half-way to canonization as a saint. Brian Kolodiejchuk, a senior Missionaries of Charity member, was made her postulator, charged to petition for her full sainthood and to collect supportive material. As part of this process he edited and published, *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light: The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

The contents of this book are mainly letters, mostly written to her confessors and superiors over a period of 66 years, supplemented with items of a journaling type. Teresa had expressed the desire that these materials be destroyed, lest they shift interest and attention from Jesus to herself, but the church authorities overruled her wish. And what the letters revealed was that, after two decades of constant joyful intimacy

with Christ, from 1948 on—that is, for 49 years, during the whole time of her leadership of the Missionaries of Charity—felt abandonment was the essence of her experience. Behind all the cheerful, upbeat, encouraging, Christ-honoring utterances that flowed from her during these years in a steady stream, lay the permanently painful sense that, quite simply, God had gone, leaving her in aching loneliness, apparently for all eternity. “They say people in hell suffer eternal pain because of the loss of God. In my soul I feel just that terrible pain of loss—of God not wanting me—of God not really existing (Jesus, please forgive my blasphemies—I have been told to write everything)... not a single thought of heaven enters my mind—for there is no hope” (Kolodiejchuk, pp. 192 f.). “I am told God loves me—and yet the reality of darkness & coldness & emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul” (p. 187). “The place of God in my soul is blank.... The torture and pain I can’t explain” (p. 210). “If I ever become a saint, I will surely be one of ‘darkness’.... I will continually be absent from heaven—to light the light of those in darkness on Earth” (p. 230). These are typical expressions, from Teresa’s own hand, of the spiritual experience she lived in. After making full allowance for her Slavic, sometimes over-the-top forthrightness, it remains clear that her torment went very deep.

Teresa’s counselors eventually convinced her that God had chosen and indeed privileged her to enter at a deep level into the suffering of Jesus on the cross, the distress to which he testified when he shouted, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk. 15:34).¹ Joseph Neuner, a theologian, told her that, though she could do nothing to change this, nor perhaps should she want to, her very craving for an awareness of God’s presence showed that he was continuing with her as a fact, and that living in darkness was part of her God-appointed destiny with Jesus. These thoughts led her, by her own admission, to find joy, not indeed in her sense of God’s absence as such, but in her knowledge that she lived in spiritual desolation by the will of God. Hence she came to settle submissively for the lifelong permanence of her condition, should God will it so (as in fact, so it appears, he did).

This disclosure of Teresa’s inner life has startled Christians everywhere, and not only because it stands in such contrast to her public self-presentation, bustling, poised and cheerful, and her public utterances, in which the joy of loving, serving and being faithful to the Lord Jesus was a constant theme. It is also, and indeed primarily, because at all times and in all traditions Christians have believed that personal holiness

of life (Teresa’s, for example) and heart-enjoyment of good and sustaining fellowship with God, anticipating heaven, do in fact go together. Why has this been believed? Because the whole Bible seems to promise it, the New Testament seems to model it, and the doctrine of God’s love to all penitent sinners who now seek to love him seems to guarantee it. The thought that long-term inner bleakness might belong to the vocation of a special servant of Christ seems initially incredible.

So what can be said to people who are devoting their life to serving God when spiritual darkness, the sense of divine abandonment, falls on their soul, as it fell on Teresa’s soul after two decades of intimacy with a gracious and, if we may so speak, forthcoming Lord? “Jesus gave himself to me,” she wrote, looking back on those years. But then for half a century, apart from a five-week break in 1958, it was a different story. At the start of this chapter I indicated my belief that, to some extent at least, Teresa’s experience is matched in the lives of others beside herself, in conservative Evangelicals and conservative Eastern Orthodoxy as well as in conservative Roman Catholicism. Outside the confidential exchanges between hurting and bewildered Christians and their pastors and spiritual directors, however, the matter is rarely discussed, so that at surface level it does not look as if this is a major problem, but the reality, I think, is different. Let us then see what is available in our respective traditions to help us face up to this perplexity as the recurring human heartache that I believe it to be.

Darkness: The Church’s Resources

Following the New Testament writers, the whole Christian church has always thought and taught that God’s planned destiny for his own redeemed people is a personal transformation, both intrinsic and relational, that can be described in several ways. In terms of the world as it is, and ourselves as we are, it is salvation, deliverance, and rescue from sin and from all the evil that is both around us and within us. In terms of our spoiled human nature and consequent exposure to death in all its dimensions, physical and spiritual, it is total healing, sinless perfection, radical reintegration, and full moral integrity expressing the maximum of love for God, for others, and for all God’s good creation as such. In terms of God’s own holiness, it is, first, the ending through Christ’s cross of God’s retributive wrath against us, and second, our re-creation and reconstruction in the divine image, from the inside out, with what Scripture calls the *heart*—that is, the motivational and dynamic core of our being—

as its starting-point and continuing center. Finally, in terms of the purpose for which God gave us our existence in the first place, it is communion and fellowship with the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit, starting now and never ending.

In Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, the journey Christians are on as they move towards their heavenly destination is typically thought of as climbing a mountain; Evangelicalism typically pictures it rather as a pilgrimage across undulating country, yet essentially on the flat; but that it is a journey which every day presents fresh challenges is something on which all agree.

In spelling out this many-sided biblical truth about human destiny, both Roman Catholics and Evangelicals reveal themselves as having been conditioned by the churchwide renewal of personal piety that began in the sixteenth century as a spinoff from the Renaissance, and that led in due course to the sentimental religious romanticism of the nineteenth century. This, with its pervasive stress on sweet feeling and suffering, was itself a spinoff from the secular romanticism of that era in the West. (Eastern Orthodoxy, less affected by cultural developments in Western Europe and North America, works still with an older, more bracing conceptuality derived from the Greek patristic Fathers.)

The Roman Catholic account of how fellowship with God is advanced, which must have been part of Teresa's spiritual nurture among the Loreto Sisters, is pronouncedly anthropocentric—that is, it focuses directly on the experience of the recipient of God's grace, which is here thought of as a beneficent energizing force, mediated mainly through the sacraments. Shaping the account is the still hugely influential mapping of the movement forward by the silver-tongued Spaniard Juan de Yepes (1542-91), colleague of Teresa of Avila in reforming and renewing the Carmelite order. He is better known today as John of the Cross. John presents spiritual advance as an upward, Godward progress in three stages, which in exposition form a sequence but in individual lives regularly overlap and intertwine, partly by reason of our own inner complexity and lack of full self-knowledge and integration, and partly because of backward slippage while making the ascent. In each stage activity and passivity are combined. In brief, John's typology of the ascent is as follows.

The first stage is purgation or catharsis, whereby a spiritual beginner is weaned from attachment to anything and everything apart from God himself. Sense-oriented, sensation-focused appetites are negated and mortified; what Richard Baxter the Puritan called "carnal self" is dethroned and denied; bad habits are

broken, and complete consecration is worked for. The active aspect of this stage is the effort to enter into full repentance and self-mastery, the passive aspect is that only by God's grace, for which the beginners pray and on which they depend, are these goals achieved. As this radical reordering of life is pursued, new feelings of helplessness and despair and killing loss arise, and so does a sense of being, after all, newly distant from God, who is not, it seems, answering prayers for more real and robust repentance and quicker escape from worldliness of heart. Apparently, God has in measure withdrawn, leaving us bereft of both what are called the comforts of religion and of most other comforts too. (In fact, he is weaning us away at a deep level from self-focused habits of mind and heart, though this is not appreciated till afterwards.) John calls this paradoxical condition the dark night of the senses.

But the purgative process is not in any case permanent; it leads in due course to the second stage, illumination, on which, now that the binding tyranny of sin has been decisively overcome, spiritual understanding, nourished by Scripture and the church's inherited formulations of revealed truth, greatly depends. Light, insight and wisdom are prayed for and graciously given, ordinarily through hard thinking, studying and meditation. Discursive doxological reflection on God, and enriching analytical contemplation of him, characterize this stage of the ascent, and all the understanding brings joy. God is teaching, and the heart is loving it.

In the unitive phase, however, to which illumination leads on, things are different. Conceptualized contemplations of God are largely left behind, and in their place, through God's gracious enabling, Christians maintain an ongoing loving look Godward, basking as it were in the sunshine and warmth of God's own love as grace sheds it abroad in their heart. This is realized union with God. It is heaven's life in embryo. It is a state in which the true, deep, authentic reality of God and ourselves in relationship, which the words that revealed it to us—first, God's words in Scripture, and then the church's echoing of them in liturgical, confessional, and devotional response—also partly hid from us, comes to be truly and deeply grasped. It is a state of enhanced selfhood, in which clarity, desire, and contentment are ineffably and transcendently one. God's grace establishes it as a steady state of expressed love, both ways, and hence of great peace, great joy, and animating adoration, for the living of the rest of one's life on earth, and then the life beyond.

But the transition from illumination to union is unsettling. The theological verbalizations and spiritual

speech through which one has come to define one's knowledge of God and to commune with him come to seem hollow and empty. The light, meaning the sense of God's presence with us and self-giving to us that the words had previously carried through our mind into our heart, dissolves into darkness, and once again one feels abandoned. The feelings of finality into which our theologizing had led us are no longer with us, and when we turn to prayer we find ourselves radically disoriented, unsure of what we thought we knew and floundering. Actively, the experience is one of seeking to hold tight to God while things sway and buckle under one, and God, one feels, slips through one's fingers. Passively, God is detaching one from what had hitherto been fixed points in one's inner life, for a purpose inconceivable in advance. John calls this the dark night of the spirit, or soul. Beyond it, when God brings us out into the sunshine of conscious union with himself, we find that what we had, or thought we had, before returns to us, reconceived, refocused, and reinforced; but inasmuch as the dark night itself was partial demolition to make way for a better building, bewilderment and pain, inward suffering, frustration, and awareness of loss, are inescapable during the demolition project.

The roots of this doctrine are in third-century Christian Platonist Origen's picturing of prayer as climbing up a mountain to God, and in the teaching of fifth-century neoplatonist Dionysius, the pseudo-Areopagite, who affirmed that darkness was the light in and by which God finally gives himself to us in love, and that purification and illumination are the steps to this union. John's scheme is a classic welding together of these ideas, with his own understanding of the two nights, that of the senses and that of the soul, added in. Variations on, and adaptations and extensions of, John's account have appeared in Roman Catholicism over the centuries in abundance, but the theme on which these variations were based is as summarized above, and this remains the starting point of expectations among Roman Catholic teachers of the spiritual life.

The delineation of advancing fellowship with God that Evangelicals have historically offered, also with many variations of detail, differs from the Catholic conception in at least the following basic ways.

First, Evangelical formulations of fellowship with God are governed, as is Evangelical theology throughout, by the principle of the authority and sufficiency of Holy Scripture. Assertions and proposals that have no biblical backing do not have a place in these accounts.

Second, Evangelical formulations of fellowship with God are angled, as indeed is the Bible's entire view of the Christian life, pneumatocentrically rather than

anthropocentrically—that is, not in a man-centered but in a Holy Spirit-centered way. As today's scholarship increasingly recognizes, the theological work of the magisterial Reformers, the English Puritans, the continental scholastics and pietists, the leaders of the eighteenth-century revivals and the international Evangelical leadership since, has been deeply Trinitarian, gospel-shaped, and focused in particular not only on the cross but also on what the Holy Spirit does in human lives. It is not too much to say that the serious exploration of the work of the Holy Spirit in the church and in Christians, which began with Luther and Calvin, opened a new era in Christian understanding.

Third, Evangelical formulations of fellowship with God are founded on, and framed by, the confessional doctrine of justification through faith. This doctrine determines that knowledge of being always a sinner—one can stand before God only through God's daily reaffirmation of one's pardon and acceptance on the basis of Christ's righteousness and vicarious sin-bearing—must always be front and center in all analyses of the life of grace.

Fourth, Evangelical formulations of fellowship with God build on an elaborate, explicit understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The Evangelical concept of regeneration covers three connected realities. The first is the Spirit's work of causing us to hear and grasp in our hearts God's gospel call for conscious, deliberate, active trust in the living Lord Jesus Christ as our sin-bearing Savior and divine Master. The second is the Spirit's invisible but potent action in uniting us to the risen, reigning Christ, thereby renewing our hearts and drawing out of us the response that the gospel requires. The third is the Spirit's coming to reside within us henceforth, imparting Jesus' presence and vitality ("Christ lives in me," Gal. 2:20), empowering us for godly living ("good works," Eph. 2:10, etc.), changing our character by instilling Jesus-like habits ("the fruit of the Spirit," Gal. 5:22-23), and making effective our efforts to terminate our personal sinful ways ("by the Spirit put to death [mortify] the misdeeds of the body," Rom. 8:13). These three blessings together constitute our new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) and new birth [or, birth from above] (Jn. 3:3-8) through the liberating Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). All that Evangelicals affirm about Christian holiness rests on, and grows out of, the twin doctrines of justification and regeneration, which declare our new status in relation to God and our new state in relation to ourselves, respectively.

How then do Evangelicals conceptualize the life of holiness, as compared with Catholic conceptualizations? Briefly:

(1) The comprehensive frame of thought is not climbing from lower to higher levels of attainment and closeness to God, but the biblical images of *walking* to a destination (i.e., living one's life purposefully; see Col. 2:6-7, etc.) and *racing* for a prize (i.e., exerting one's energy purposefully; see 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 4:7; Heb. 12:1-3, etc.). Inasmuch as this involves breaking with not only one's previous behavior patterns but also with the whole tenor of the world's way of acting, the Christian life, which fundamentally is faith in action, may and must be viewed as a life of repentance, that is, of turning or returning to God from the way one was or might soon be going, and making all-round obedience to God the rule of one's life henceforth.

(2) The experience is of the Spirit engendering good desires, plans, and purposes in us, and enabling good fulfillment of them by us, as he changes us at a deep level, inducing profounder humility, heartier thanksgiving, purer God-centeredness and others-centeredness through Jesus-centeredness, livelier adoration of the triune God, more openhearted displays of initiative and outreach for the Lord's honor and praise, and more deeply anchored joy of assurance, as the Holy Spirit bears his inward witness to our hope of glory.

(3) Our consecration and obedience to God, which are the fundamentals of holy living, are to be lived out in the social contexts of marriage, family, local church, and local community, rather than in the heavily regulated apartness of religious orders. The long-standing Catholic distinction between "the religious" (clergy, monks, nuns) and the rest is not made. The historic monastic Rules (of Benedict and others) are currently much appreciated as resources for the ordering of Evangelical personal life in terms of attitude and self-discipline, but monastic community life as such is not.

(4) Today's Evangelicalism has little to say about spiritual darkness, but in the older tradition it was very different. It was recognized that God's sovereignty brings upon us from time to time episodes of spiritual darkness, in which what is sensed is his absence and displeasure rather than his presence and the assurance of his love and of one's own future happiness with him. Sometimes these moments are wake-up calls regarding overdue behavioral changes, and sometimes they are simple tests of fidelity, imposed as a kind of workout through which the saints emerge stronger than before. Detailed evidence as to what such desertion, or abandonment, feels like, why God inflicts it, and how to handle it, is found in the Psalms (see 38, 42, 88, 119:67, etc.), in the book of Job, and in Isaiah 50:10: "Who among you fears the LORD

and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God." The comments of the Puritan Matthew Henry on this verse cover the ground, as Evangelicals understand it.

... it is a case which sometimes happens among the professors of religion, yet not very often... They walk in darkness, when their evidences for heaven are clouded, their joy in God is interrupted, the testimony of the Spirit is suspended, and the light of God's countenance is eclipsed.

And what to do?

Let him stay himself upon his God, his in covenant; let him keep hold of his covenant-relation to God, and call God his God, as Christ on the cross, My God, My God. Let him stay himself upon the promises of the covenant and build his hopes on them.

In other words, as Toplady expressed it in the days of the Evangelical Revival:

*Blest is the man, O God,
That stays himself on thee;
Who waits for thy salvation, Lord,
Shall thy salvation see.
When we in darkness walk,
Nor feel the heavenly flame,
Then is the time to trust our God,
And rest upon his name.
Soon shall our doubts and fears
Subside at his control;
His lovingkindness shall break through
The midnight of the soul.
His grace will to the end
Stronger and brighter shine;
Nor present things, nor things to come,
Shall quench the life divine.*

Whatever further message the darkness may have, it is always a call from God to keep hoping by indomitable faith in his covenant faithfulness. For faith, once given, is indomitable, just as God's covenant is unbreakable, and the knowledge that this is so is an effective means of keeping Christians trusting and hoping, even in the dark.

Darkness: Some Closing Reflections

Ordinarily, when persons who in Christ are alive to God and pursuing holiness of life bring to God their

praises and petitions, the sense that God is present, and hears, and cares is part of the experience. In the same way, awareness of the location (some sort of room, or out in the open air) and of one's own posture (kneeling, standing, sitting, walking, or lying prostrate) are part of the experience. Awareness of these physical realities is diffused, in the sense of being peripheral to the encounter with God that one is focusing on, being only the psycho-physical frame for the focusing; nonetheless, it is integral to the experience, in the sense that without it shock and disruption will prevail. (Imagine how it would be if in the middle of your own praying you felt yourself floating in empty space.) Now, confidence in the friendly presence and attention of our God when we pray is given us by the Holy Spirit who indwells us: it is in fact God starting to fulfill the prayer that he will shine the light of his face upon us (Num. 6:25; Ps. 4:6, 31:16, 119:135, etc.; 2 Cor. 4:4). But should the Spirit for any reason withhold this diffused sense of God being with us in love to us when we pray, we should feel totally disoriented and desolate, and our praying itself would seem empty and unreal. Does this ever happen? Yes. Some Christians never go through this experience, but some have to face it quite often. And Mother Teresa had to endure it for half a century, from the founding of the Missionaries of Charity to the end of her life.

Some specific comments may now help to put Teresa's experience in proper perspective. Negatives first.

This was not an experience of *doubt*; for doubt debilitates, draining one's confidence and energy by undermining one's certainties. Teresa's certainties were never in doubt. She was always sure of the historic Christian faith and of the grace that flows from Jesus, particularly as she believed through the Mass; she had no doubt about the administrative procedures of the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church; she had absolute confidence in the love of the Lord Jesus for herself and for everyone else, including the poorest of the Indian poor, whom Hindu society wrote off as valueless; she was totally convinced that she was called to take the love of Christ to them; and she was ever a human dynamo in furthering this project.

Nor was her experience one of depression, in any of its varied and complex modes; for depression, like doubt, drains the energy, and can hardly be kept hidden for any length of time. Teresa, however, was always genuinely cheerful in public, and spoke constantly of the joy of doing Jesus' will. She practiced, and taught her nuns to practice, what she called "the big smile" in everything. Her often-repeated "Take whatever he gives, and give whatever he takes, with a

big smile" (p. 225) became almost a motto and a mantra for her ministry.

Nor was she passing through *the dark night of the soul* as Catholic tradition conceives it; for that darkness, however similar while it lasts to Teresa's, is temporary, leading on to experiential union with God, whereas Teresa by her own testimony had known experiential union with Christ in particular for twenty years before the pain of inner darkness became her permanent condition.

Nor, again, was she undergoing an experience of *detection*, God sending pain to alert her to issues of repentance and obedience that she had evaded. Quite apart from the fact that the inner darkness spanned her whole half-century of leadership, it is safe to say there were no problems of that kind in Teresa's life.

Was it demonic? Partly, perhaps; for Job's voicing of the desolation into which God had allowed Satan to plunge him (Job 23) matches in several ways Teresa's written expressions, penned for her confessors and spiritual superiors, of her own inward barrenness as she felt it. But whereas God permitted Job to be desolated in order to show how his faith would express itself in faithfulness under pain and strain, it seems that Teresa's suffering was ordained for a pastoral purpose.

Was her experience then disciplinary in a biblical sense, that is, planned by God to enhance the quality of her discipleship? Kolodiejchuk seems right to urge that it was. There are two possibilities here, maybe overlapping (it is not for us to be dogmatic on this point). The divine discipline might be devotional, aimed at deepening the relationship between God's servant and the triune Lord, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And it might be diaconal, aimed at qualifying the disciple more fully for particular works of ministry to others. The interpretation of Teresa's experience as devotional discipline seems dubious. What Teresa underwent was certainly not the transitional dark night of the soul as John of the Cross described it, a condition paving the way to deeper union with God, whatever correspondences there may be between the quality of the two experiences as such. For her experience followed a deep-level, years-long enjoyment of union with, in particular, Jesus, the Lord whom she loved, and whose "little bride" she had seen herself in her youth as being, and once the dryness, desolation, and sense of divine withdrawal had come it was permanent. But the reality of this as diaconal discipline seems clear. "I really believe," wrote a counselor, "that the reason Mother Teresa had to undergo so much darkness in her life is that it would bring about a greater identification with the poor."² Surely so.

So what biblical truth does all of this illustrate and enforce for us? First, that the life of holiness, loving and uncompromising consecration to God, will and must also be a life of unstinted loving service to one's neighbors, including the least attractive among them.

Second, that what one does for others is the real test of the genuineness and depth of one's love to God, and specifically to Jesus Christ the Lord.

Third, that Christian contentment, cheerfulness, and joy are fed, not directly by spiritual experiences—feelings, visions, raptures, thrills, which come and go, and in particular cases may hardly come at all—but by cognitive meditation and reflection—that is, by thinking, and thinking often—about the goodness, glory, and grace of the holy Three.

Fourth, that God uses the darkness experiences, not only outward in circumstances but inward in the soul, for instruction (“only God can satisfy”), correction (“lay aside every weight”), edification (“fear not... be strong... hope to the end”), and preparation for usefulness (“...who comforts us in all our troubles, so that

we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God”).

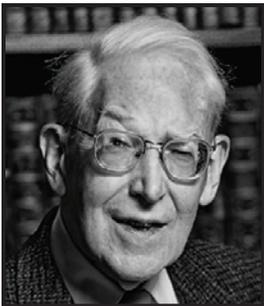
Fifth, it is not God's usual practice to tell us in advance the reason why testing experiences are planned to come our way, and we do not glorify God by agonizing over the “why?” question. Our calling, rather, is to respond to every state of affairs, and every form of experience, in as Christ-like a manner as we can.

In all these matters, we should thank God for Mother Teresa's example, which points the way ahead for us all.

Notes

1. This idea of what has technically been termed reparative suffering is a Roman Catholic speculation. It stems from the idea that Christ draws saints, in the Catholic sense of specially holy persons, into a specially close identification with himself, particularly in relation to the agonies of his atoning death. The idea is used to explain stigmata (marks on hands and feet corresponding to the nail prints on Jesus' crucified body) on the rare occasions when they occur. Any sign of this specially close identification with Christ's crucifixion experience is seen as a badge of honor, given by the Savior himself.

2. The counselor is Father Michael van der Peet (Kolodiejchuk, p. 277). Teresa wrote to Father Neuner: “The physical situation of my poor left in the streets unwanted, unmoved, unclaimed—are (sic) the true picture of my own spiritual life, of my love for Jesus, and yet this terrible pain has never made me desire to have it different. What's more, I want it to be like this for as long as He wants it” (p. 232). Writes Kolodiejchuk: “Her interior darkness gave Mother Teresa the capacity to comprehend the feelings of the poor” (p. 233).



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This article will appear as a new appendix in a reissue of *Rediscovering Holiness* by J.I. Packer (Gospel Light/Regal, October 2009). Printed here by permission of the author. All rights reserved.

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