

Transforming Union

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I am a daughter of the Church, Chapter VIII

Transforming Union

I am the vine and you are the branches

(Jn.15:5)

Transforming Union

As if the ends of two wax candles were joined so that the light they give is one.

...Is there even any use in making a **special study of transforming union**, when Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross seem to **assimilate** it into spiritual marriage?...

A. Spiritual Marriage & Transforming Union

Spiritual marriage and transforming union do **not** designate **two different spiritual states**, rather **two aspects** of the same interior reality or the **summit of the spiritual life**.

Spiritual marriage calls to mind that spiritual state ... indicating that the soul has arrived at the **summit**. It places on relief...the **phenomenal aspect** of the **union...**

A. Spiritual Marriage & Transforming Union

Transforming union designates...the **degree of charity** that brings about that **perfect union with God** through the **transformation** and **likeness of love**. It is ...**charity** in its **transforming** and **unifying plenitude** ... It is useful to **distinguish** clearly between **spiritual marriage** and **transforming union**..

A. Spiritual Marriage & Transforming Union

...between the **manifestation** and the **reality** of which they are **signs**... because **confusion** between the **mystical phenomenon** and **reality** are frequent, favoring the **phenomenon**, sought out and emphasized as if it were the principal element. This is because ... the mass of faithful are **eager for signs** and for the **extraordinary**, the **miraculous**.

A. Spiritual Marriage & Transforming Union

Even spiritual persons seem to desire the **mystical experience** over **spiritual charity** ... to the point of making **spiritual marriage** a **state superior to transforming union** ... Some even hesitated to recognize in Saint Therese of the Child Jesus the **highest states of spiritual life** as they weren't accompanied ... by the **mystical phenomena** thought **inseparable** of these states. The Saint however warned that **appearing perfect** is of **small importance compared to being so.**

A. Spiritual Marriage & Transforming Union

Confusion between **being** (brilliant and showy) and **appearing** (hidden and obscure) can bring about errors in the **nature of perfection** and the **goal** sought and can cause errors in direction from the very beginning of spiritual life. Souls can be **delayed** or brought to a **standstill** in their journey. The road of the **imperfect soul** is the one where all the **goods of heaven** are sought, the goods that accompany **union** but are **not** union and can hinder one from attaining it, if desired for themselves.

A. Spiritual Marriage & Transforming Union

Let's situate **transforming union** in reference to the manifestations of **spiritual marriage** and point out the **relationship** between them and their respective **value**.

1-Manifestations, the Fruits of Love

These **manifestations**, the **fruit of transforming union**, take different forms and expressions.

The extraordinary and first favors of **contemplative lights** procure the **advancement** of the soul, but usually have a clearly **charismatic character**, that is, they are given for the good of the **Church**. They prepare the soul for the accomplishment of a **special mission**...They are **not** a **specific fruit of union** of the soul with God. And so...these extraordinary favors could **never**...be considered a sufficient **proof of sanctity**...

2-Contemplative Light

Contemplative lights are sovereignly useful.
They are a means ordered to the
development of love.

2-Contemplative Light

To belittle the **riches** of light that proceed from the fire of transforming union would be wrong. They are **divine riches**, among the purest and most useful that God dispenses here below. They **disclose** to the **contemplative gaze**, as much as can be on earth, the **secrets of God's very being**. They derive their excellence from the fact that they issue from the soul's contact with supernatural realities... **Light and life, thought and being**, join in this **unifying contact** that love establishes between two spirits ... that of **God** and that of the **soul** ...

2-Contemplative Light

Such **lights** are one of the most **precious treasures of the Church**, one of its most **effective means of evangelization and teaching**. From works written under their influence flows a ...plenitude of love that enlightens and draws. They are the rivers of living water which, according to the promise of Jesus, flow from him who believes...

2-Contemplative Light

...They reveal **God living and acting here below...** To go through the treatises of Saint Teresa of Avila and the other Carmelites Saints is enough to make one aware of the **supernatural power and wealth of light and recollection** that **emanate from writings composed under the influence of a love** which comes from **abounding mystical understanding...**

2-Contemplative Light

Love is the end of all...The **beatific vision** is alone **more desirable**, but is not of earth...

It would be **vain** to be **attached** to these lofty **manifestations of knowledge**, and to want to use them for themselves. That would be to try to grasp with the hand the flame leaping up from the fire or the light coming from it, so as to carry it away and make it one's own...Separated from the fire from which it emanates...it seems profaned and loses its living force...

2-Contemplative Light

Love alone has **absolute value** here below ...

3-The Beatific Vision

The **beatific vision** is in the measure of **transforming love** and issues from it.

3-The Beatific Vision

Contemplative lights lead the soul up to the **transparent veil** that conceals the majesty of God...One might think that when **death**, or rather the **force of love**, has **torn asunder the veil**, the lofty **knowledge** experienced in transforming union would, through the torn veil, be made **perfect** in the presence of its divine object. Not so...

3-The Beatific Vision

The direct vision of God pertains to a **new power** given the soul ... or the **light of glory**;
it issues from love...

3-The Beatific Vision

The **contemplative lights** that **perfect** and **sustain** the **supernatural life** here below, the beginning of eternal life, **do not** ...bring that life to its **perfection** in **heaven**...

Love and the **union** it effects between God and the soul transcend all **spiritual goods** of this world... and **love alone** will receive as its reward the vision and possession of God...

3-The Beatific Vision

If I have prophecy and know all mysteries...yet do not have charity (love), I am nothing. 1Cor. 13:2

...if we would place all things according to their true value; we can **see clearly** the **only goal** of all our desire.

B-Transforming Union

... It is important to know in what the **transforming union** consists ...The **definition** gives us the true notion of **sanctity** or **holiness** ...This union is a **supernatural union**. It comes through **grace** and is a **participation** in the **divine life** ... It consists in the **perfect union of wills** ...

B-Transforming Union

Perfect conformity with the will of God; ... is the essential effect and practical criterion of perfect union. And union cannot exist without perfect purity...

Purity in the soul is its capacity to **receive** God and **be united** with Him... the soul can **penetrate** into God and receive Him into itself in the measure of its purity...

B-Transforming Union

This **aptitude for union** differs according to souls, being determined, it seems, by a **design of God** ...The important thing then for each soul, is to **perfect the capacity for purity** that God has given it and to arrive at the purity that this perfection requires ...Each soul is called to a certain **degree of union** ...

B-Transforming Union

The **transforming union** presented by Saint Teresa...
has its **positive criteria** that **isolate** it
from **divine union** and that ... place it on the **summit**,
while presenting it as a legitimate object of our
supernatural hope.

B-Transforming Union

Though mysterious, these **criteria** are **precise** and **certain**. They can be grouped under **three headings**:

- transforming plenitude of grace;
- sovereignly dominating presence of the Holy Spirit;
- identification with Christ Jesus.

1-Transforming Plenitude of Grace

The term transforming union evokes ... **complete transformation** of the soul through love. The soul 'is made divine and becomes **God by participation** in so far as may be in this life." (Spiritual Canticle). Its union with God is such that they have become "**two natures in one spirit and love of God.**" The full meaning of these words is best understood through the **definition** of sanctifying grace.

1-Transforming Plenitude of Grace

Sanctifying grace, first given at **Baptism**, is a real participation in divine life. It is infused into the soul...and takes possession of the **faculties** by means of the infused **theological virtues** of faith, hope and love or charity... The soul and its faculties are both enveloped and penetrated by this **divine life**. In fact **spiritual life** is nothing else than the **conquering progression** of the **divine life** by gradual interiorization (or turning within)...

1-Transforming Plenitude of Grace

...**Grace**, or participation in the divine life, penetrates to the depths of the soul, where it **progressively conquers** and **transforms** the **natural powers** of the **soul** (the intellect, the memory and the will) without destroying them and while imposing its properties on them. The soul becomes **God by participation**...

Grace **transforms** the soul only to **unite** it more closely to God. Union and transformation go along together...Grace is **charity**, as God is love...

1-Transforming Plenitude of Grace

This Mansion of God becomes the soul's now too, where it will live from now on. For transforming union is **stable** and **definitive**...This **essential character**, the stability of the union, is illustrated especially by the symbolism of marriage...

This union draws its **stability** from the transformation which is its **basis**. ... it is confirmed by an abiding contact with God...this transformation comes about by a certain absorption of the soul in God, yet leaving the **two natures distinct**.

1-Transforming Plenitude of Grace

Transforming union consists in this **mutual** and **complete merging** and the **perfect love** that brings it to pass. In spiritual betrothal, says Saint Teresa, the soul “is affected only in its higher part,” whereas now the soul is drawn completely into its **center** where God dwells. VII Mansions

1-Transforming Plenitude of Grace

To **make clear** what this **transforming union** is and to express the various aspects of it---transformation, union of two natures through communication and stability in a certain absorption in God---Saint Teresa eagerly multiplies comparison and symbols:

1-Transforming Plenitude of Grace

We might say that union is as if the ends of two wax candles were joined so that the light they give is one: the wicks and the wax and the light are all one; yet afterwards the one candle can be perfectly well separated from the other and the candles become two again, or the wick may be withdrawn from the wax. But here it is like rain falling from the heavens into a river or a spring; there is nothing but water there and it is impossible to divide or separate the water belonging to the river from that which fell from the heavens. It is as if a tiny streamlet enters the sea, from which it will find no way of separating itself, or as in a room with two large windows through which the light streams in: it enters in different places but all becomes one.

Perhaps when Saint Paul says: "He who is joined to God becomes one spirit with Him," he is referring to his sovereign Marriage, which presupposes the entrance of His Majesty into the soul by Union. (VII Mansions)

1-Transforming Plenitude of Grace

These comparisons cast some light on an aspect of transforming Union...but let's bring them together to cast sufficient light on this **profound spiritual reality**...the transforming union ... shows us in the Saints, the living realization of **essence of divine life** in souls. It is only that, but it is all that. It is **stable** and **permanent** ... and can progress.

1-Transforming Plenitude of Grace

By **habitual union**, a transformation takes place in the substance of the **soul** and in the deep roots of the **faculties**... Through the **influence** of the union and of God Himself on the **activity** of the faculties, the soul is **transformed**.

1-Transforming Plenitude of Grace

Transforming Union does not change but the love that brings it about can reach **greater degrees of perfection and intensity**. When a soul reaches transforming union all its natural tendencies and properties are **absorbed** by love. It is wholly **filled with love** and the soul's **capacity** for love can always be enlarged; love can go on **progressing** in new perfection and intensity. Love continues to kindle ever more subtle divine fires in the furnace of the purified, transformed soul...

2-Presence of the Holy Spirit

...Participation in divine life and in the presence of God are **two elements of sanctifying grace** received at **Baptism**. They are both fully developed in the transforming union. **Charity**, which transforms and deifies the soul also ensures union with God... The transformed soul possesses a **divine presence distinct** from the participation in the divine life that has become habitual. As the apostle says:

The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Rom. 5:5

2-Presence of the Holy Spirit

...In transforming union, the divine presence, by its activity and domination over the soul, becomes as it were the **central fact** around which the soul's whole life **gravitates**.

3- Identification with Christ Jesus

Transforming union ends in **identification with Jesus Christ**, it's most perfect expression and work... He is the **goal of perfection**, God's masterpiece in the world; ... we must be transformed into Him....

The Holy Spirit ...takes possession of the souls as of a temple at Baptism to effect in it the incarnation of divine life.

3- Identification with Christ Jesus

Holiness and the **plan of God** are summed up in a few words in the priestly prayer of Jesus:

That they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and them in me; they may be perfected in unity.

Jn. 17:23

3- Identification with Christ Jesus

...The **divine life** in us is the life of Christ; ...the whole Christ is made up of Christ and His members. This **essential truth** must be realized and manifested in the transforming union...

The **exterior revelation** of Christ in souls will take **different forms** ... it must be real and deep and visible by the likeness that love creates in the will, thoughts, sentiments, and external activity...

This **profound penetration** into the charity of Christ and this transformation in Him, together with the **lights of living faith** that accompany it---what a happy definition of transforming union, the fullness of God in the soul!

3- Identification with Christ Jesus

...but the source par excellence of the divine life here below is the Holy Eucharist—the principal channel of gracethat sanctifies the soul and builds up the Church.... it unites souls to Christ Jesus. The Holy Eucharist is the sanctifying sacrament because of the soul's union with Jesus Christ.

3- Identification with Christ Jesus

We discover this in fact in Saint Teresa. After describing this wondrous union with God that spiritual marriage brings to pass, the Saint adds, recalling the words of Saint Paul:

“For to me, to live is Christ; and to die is gain.” This I think, the soul may say here, for it is here that the little butterfly to which we have referred dies, and with the greatest joy, because Christ is now its life.

VII Mansions

3- Identification with Christ Jesus

A little further on, she insists on the discovery she has just made. Speaking of Christ's praying for His apostles, she says:

His Majesty went on to say: "Not for them alone do I pray, but also for all who believe in Me";
and again: "I am in them."

3- Identification with Christ Jesus

... Transforming union is a union and communion of persons, realized in Jesus Christ...

There are great depths to be fathomed in Christ... Saint John of the Cross tells us that this knowledge is the loftiest wisdom attainable in this life. (Spiritual Canticle)...

3- Identification with Christ Jesus

We are truly on the summit. We have gathered the last and highest fruit of the transforming union, the most beautiful and the simplest: union with Christ Jesus and a likeness to Him through love, for the realization of the whole Christ. Christian perfection and contemplative perfection lie in this union and this realization of Jesus Christ our Lord.

3- Identification with Christ Jesus

In conclusion, transforming union is a transformation through loving resemblance with Christ Jesus, the God-Man. The saint is the branch brought to fullness of life by the sap of the vine that is Christ.

...Jesus is God, and the transformation in Him is a divinization demanding both **detachment** and **self-denial**...

3- Identification with Christ Jesus

... Perfection consists in the likeness of love with Jesus, God and Man, and this resemblance is brought about in us by an incarnation of the divine life, which transforms but does not destroy human nature.

Divinization of human nature, that we may be children of God; incarnation of the divine life that we may be Christians—such is the twofold realism we must find in transformation union if it be genuine and authentically Christian.

AMEN