

According to St. John of the Cross, there are three signs that show that God is about to give the first experience of infused contemplation. There is no vision or sound with this contemplation, and not necessarily any feeling. The experience may be either arid or sweet. In it, the soul perceives a contact with God as real as anything, maybe more real than one's knuckles hitting the table. The soul knows without being told that it should not pray or do anything but rather to pay attention. It usually lasts only a few minutes, then fades out. The soul cannot have it at will; it comes when God so wills. So, the next time might be far in the future or very soon. It does mark the crossover into the illuminative way, in which there are more and greater experiences of infused contemplation.

Many fine theologians think a soul will not reach perfection without going through infused contemplation. Others consider it as a sort of side excursion.

But it is clear that at the end of the illuminative period there is a second night, the night of the spirit, in contrast to the previous night of the senses. That second night is very difficult, and regularly involves extreme temptations against any or all virtues, even faith, and even violent sexual temptations. After that night, the soul may have the spiritual espousals and then later, the spiritual marriage. St. John of the Cross describes the very peak:

Ascent of Mt. Carmel (III.II.10): "God alone moves the powers of these souls to do the things that are right, and they cannot be moved to any others....Such were the actions of the most glorious Virgin, Our Lady, who being elevated from the beginning [of her life] to this lofty state never had the form of any creature impressed on her, nor was moved by such, but was always moved by the Holy Spirit."

It is obvious that this is the ultimate takeover of the human will by the divine will, the Holy Ghost. God Himself, alone, moves the will of one in the Mystical Marriage. The soul is not dead in this process; it is still very much human, very much alive. But all it contributes is the consent to be moved in this way.

God by His movement causes the soul to see some particular thing as good: That almost automatically causes the soul to be favorable to what God proposes. At this point could the soul decide to accept the divine movement? No, for St. Paul (Phil 2.13) says of souls even at a lesser stage: It is God who works in you both the will and the doing.

But the soul is not totally passive. For the Council of Trent defines (DS 1554): "If anyone shall say that the will of man, moved and aroused by God, does not cooperate at all in assenting to God calling and arousing by which it might prepare itself to obtain the grace of justification, and that neither could it dissent if it willed, but that like a lifeless thing it does not act at all, but is merely passive: Let him be anathema." There is no way to conceive less activity on the part of the soul: it is not lifeless and passive. This dogmatic definition applies to souls even in the highest possible state.

Now let us look at the Divine Will devotion. It has it that the will is taken over by God. "Our Lord responds...moreover it is certain that I have called you [Luisa] first over other souls. Because to no other souls, however much I have loved them, have I shown how to live in My Will. But the Divine Will working in the creature and he