

09. Part IV Healing (continued)

2. There is somewhere to go (pages 59-66)



‘One dark night ... I went out.’

We are on a journey, with a goal: The Promised Land, the Father

‘Sense means body, imagination, emotion.

Spirit: there where resources converge, the home of choice,
conscience, self.

These terms are dynamic.

Where sense is lord, the whole being is sensual,
hostage to needs of its own creation.

If we learn to live from within, we become spiritual,
and with that our sensuality comes back home.

All this implies a journey: a surrender of sense to spirit,
and of spirit to Holy Spirit.

And because surrender feels like dying,

John calls it a night journey' (page 59).

‘As well as sense and spirit, John distinguishes between active and passive, what we do and what is done to us. This yields a rather stocky four-fold pattern:

active night of sense;

passive night of sense;

active night of spirit;

passive night of spirit.’

‘John warns against reading rigidity into it.

For one thing, our effort and God’s action run in tandem from the start.

For another, our emotional life is really set in order only when our inmost self is purified’ (page 59; see [Night II, 3.1](#)).

‘John is saying that every dimension of the human person

has to strive towards God,

and, discovering the inadequacy of its striving,

must come under God’s transforming hand’ (page 60).

‘The journey had to feel like night because it leads into the unknown’ (page 60).

Christopher Columbus died in 1506, only a generation before John (b. 1542)

‘It is like a traveller going to new lands of which he has no personal knowledge: the roads he travels are new – no personal knowledge of them either – and he will rely, not on what he knew up to then, but on what others say. It will be a journey in uncertainty’ (Night II, 16.8).

‘Setting out on the path means renouncing your own path.’

(Ascent II.4.5)

‘One may have to renounce the satisfaction of seeing growth at the time of growth’ (page 60).

Only looking back can we see that weakness has been overcome. While it is happening we feel a sense of weakness and an anxiety to be free.

‘Growth may not be felt at the time because what John holds out to us are not new ingredients, but a mellowing and maturing of what is most true ours ... also because we grow in spirals, not straight lines’ (page 61).

Hence the importance of a guide. The guide is the Holy Spirit. A human companion will help only if he or she respects this.

‘Those who guide souls should realise that the principle agent and guide and motive force in this matter is not them, but the Holy Spirit, who never fails to care for people. Human guides are only instruments to guide people to perfection by faith and the law of God, according to the Spirit that God is giving to the individual person. So the directors’ concern should be to see whether they can recognise where God is carrying them, and if they cannot, leave them alone and do not disturb them’ (Flame 3.46).

Night is a journey into truth. It requires humility

The freedom of knowing ‘that I am part of something bigger than I had ever realised’ (page 63).

‘With that comes the prospect of fresh sensitivity to other people’s pain’ (page 63), a gentleness towards ourselves and others.

‘Through the night, God gathers together all the strength, the possibilities and longings of the soul ... so that this total harmony can commit its strength and power to love. In this way we will come to fulfil truly the first commandment, which says – rejecting nothing that is human, and excluding nothing human from this love – You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul and with all your strength’ (Night II.11.4).

‘In the midst of the darkness and pain where love is present, we feel a certain companionship and inner strength, which accompanies us’ (Night II.II.7).

‘What the night journey does – where that which comes upon us takes us out of our control – is retrieve our scattered human potential, place it in our hands, and so enable us, at last, to employ it in loving’ (page 63).

‘Many good things come when we are looking for something else. Peace comes, if we are looking, not to feel peaceful, but to work for justice, Community comes if what we want is, not to feel togetherness, but to serve. Consolation comes if we seek , not to be consoled, but to be faithful. The risen One comes when we allow ourselves to die’ (page 64).

‘The first thing we want to do when we arrive after a long journey is to set eyes on the one we especially love’ (page 65).

‘However united we may be with God in this life, we will never rest nor be satisfied till our glory appears – especially now that we have savoured the taste of that glory’ (Flame 1.29).

‘Since the Resurrection, the world and history are on the receiving end of a vast, divine, hidden agenda, drawing us into “the centre of the spirit of the perfect life in Christ” (Flame 3.10) (page 66).

‘Night – in life and death – announces that time does not just meander. It is a journey, with a goal’ (page 66).

3. There is somewhere to go and it has to be God (pages 67-71)

‘If night first tells us that there is somewhere to go, it also announces that we cannot get there on our own’ (page 67).

‘Progress means recognising that we cannot heal ourselves’ (page 67).

‘Faced with inbuilt weakness, one solution is to try harder. This may indeed help, but, John suggests, it will not cure. Nobody escapes their shadow by running faster’ (page 68).

‘It is fitting that we do what we can, so that God will put us in that divine surgery, where we are healed of all of which we could not heal ourselves. For however much we might help ourselves, we cannot by our own effort purify ourselves so as to be disposed in the least part for the divine union of perfect love’ (Night I, 3.3).

The journey is to God.

My guide is the Spirit of Jesus that God pours into my heart.

Engaged in this journey all my human God-given potential
is harnessed for loving.

Longing for eternity keeps my present horizon from closing in.

Only the transcendent God can take me there.

I cannot heal myself. I cannot secure my deepest longings.

The flame and the spring can come only from the heart of God.

John traces the path not so that I can predict,
but to encourage me to surrender to God's guidance
and to the gravity of God's grace.