HILDEGARD, JUNG, AND THE DARK SIDE OF GOD

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I form the light and create darkness;
I make peace and create evil:
I the Lord do all these things.
Isaiah 45:7

A tidy theodicy is an oxymoron. Religious people have long struggled with a contradictory and profound incompatibility: how can humans invest their allegiance and fidelity in an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and absolutely good God while that same God "permits" catastrophic tragedy, innocent suffering, and evil abounding in creation and in human experience? That creation groans and humans suffer is not the issue; it is the character of God that vexes and perplexes. This divine darkness is complex and controversial material. This article offers a foray into intriguing possibilities between twelfth-century German Benedictine *magistra*, mystic, theologian, and reformer Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179) and twentieth-century Swiss pioneer in depth psychology Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961).[1]

[1]The material in this article is substantively taken from Avis Clendenen, *Experiencing Hildegard: Jungian Perspectives* (Wilmette, Ill.: Chiron Publications, 2009) with permission from Chiron Publications. Gratitude is expressed to Murray Stein, author of *Jung's Treatment of Christianity*, and Ann C. Lammers, author of *In God's Shadow: The Collaboration of Victor White and C. G. Jung*, for their helpful review of the article, and to Dr. Lammers for her recommendations.

Hildegard and Jung addressed with unhesitating directness the consequences of neglecting or repressing the innate introspective, critically self-reflective capacities that reside in the human personality. They both foresaw that apparent successes in conquering nature had the effect of subduing wildness in such a way as to alienate one from the dark unconscious, the dark cloud where God is (Ex. 20:21).

Seven references to Hildegard von Bingen's work exist in Jung's *Collected Works*.[2] While his reliance on Hildegard to illustrate various points is not overwhelming by any means, he makes note of her in seven different volumes of his work spanning decades in the development of his thinking. Their respective stories reveal the dynamics of how the human personality can successfully negotiate the forces that submerge consciousness and creativity. They both were immersed in the Christian mystery, possessed the interior capacity to encounter the numinous, believed in the role of psychic suffering in coming to spiritual consciousness, and explored innovative expressions of Trinitarian life. Emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually, Hildegard and Jung exercised a creative freedom that remains relevant primarily because of the depth and scope of their pristine individuality and multidisciplinary expression across many venues of creativity. A full account of the expanse of their productivity is beyond the scope of this essay, but a few salient historical and biographical remarks help the reader appreciate their synchronicities across the span of centuries.

Hildegard and Jung in Context

In a passage included in the *Vita* of Hildegard, she writes, "In the eleven hundredth year after the Incarnation of Christ, the teaching and fiery justice of the Apostles, which Christ had established among the Christians and spiritual people, began to

[2]For a concise identification of these references, found in volumes 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 18, see Avis Clendenen, "Encounter with the Unconscious: Hildegard in Jung," *Jung Journal: Culture and Psyche 3*(1), (Winter 2009) 39-56.

slow down and turn into hesitation, I was born in those times."[3] Hildegard, like Jung eight centuries later, faced an era of faltering faith. She characterized her time as one when:

> The catholic faith now totters among the people and the Gospel limps in their midst; the most steadfast volumes that the most learned doctors expounded with utmost diligence are melting away out of shameful disgust; and the life-giving food of divine Scripture has grown tepid.[4]

This was a time of paradox, an epoch of spiritual fervor, extraordinary expansion of monastic life, and simultaneously the clericalization of the church. Her visionary life began at age three and continued throughout her eighty-one years of life. An unusual child, Hildegard confided in Jutta, her mentor, "When I was three years old, I saw an immense light that shook my soul; but, because of my youth, I could not externalize it."[5] Hildegard's parents tithed her as a tribute to the Lord when she was around eight years old, although scholars now nuance this age reference.

Following Jutta's death, Hildegard was elected *magistra* of the convent of nuns at Disibodenberg, where she lived for forty-four years. Her time of tenure was marked by conflicts over the centralization of papal power, the development of canon law, the modeling of church structure and authority on the feudal system, the institutionalization of the discipline of celibacy for clergy, and the growing corruption of the Church. While some of these issues were not of particular importance to her, she did remark

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[3]Gottfried of Disibodenberg and Theodoric of Echternach, *The Life of Saintly Hildegard,* trans. Hugh Feiss (Toronto: Peregrina Publishing Company, 1996) 43-4.

[4]From the *Scivias* 3.11.18, quoted in Beverly Mayne Kienzle, *Hildegard of Bingen and Her Gospel Homilies* (Trunhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2009) 1.

[5]Carolyn Worman Sur, *The Feminine Images of God in the Visions of Saint Hildegard of Bingen's* Scivias (New York: The Mellen Press, 1993) 26.

that her times induced "poor and frail" women like herself to challenge the learned masculine clergy to reform.

Barbara Newman succinctly captures Hildegard's remarkable life:

> Hildegard is the only woman of her age to be accepted as an authoritative voice on Christian doctrine; the first woman who received express permission from a pope to write theological books; the only medieval woman who preached openly before mixed audiences of clergy and laity with full approval of church authority; the author of the first known morality play, and the only twelfth-century playwright who is not anonymous; the only composer of her era known both by name and by a large corpus of surviving music; the first scientific writer to discuss sexuality and gynecology from a female perspective; and the first saint whose official biography includes a first-person memoir.[6]

Historian Gerda Lerner said: "The life of Hildegard of Bingen exemplifies the breakthrough of a female genius who managed to create an entirely new role for herself and other women without ostensibly violating the patriarchal confines within which she functioned."[7] "Her sheer force of will," Newman says in her introduction to the *Scivias*, "combined with a dazzling array of spiritual and intellectual gifts, a courage hardened by decades of struggle, and a prophetic persona, which she displayed in season and out, made her a formidable opponent; and she did not take defeat easily."[8]

The same can be said of twentieth-century scholar and psychologist Carl Gustav Jung. From a young age, Jung was

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[6]Barbara Newman, *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 1.

[7]Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to 1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 52.

[8]Hildegard von Bingen, *Scivias*, trans. Mother Columba Hart and Jane Bishop (New York: Paulist Press, 1990) introduction by Barbara Newman, 15.

aware that theological teaching often left the heart hollow; there was more to the experience of God than religion allowed. There was also something dark and deep about the human experience and the divine experience that would absorb much of Jung's empirical and spiritual quest. In his autobiography, Jung says:

> From my eleventh year I have been launched upon a single enterprise which is my "main business." My life has been permeated and held together by one idea and one goal: namely, to penetrate into the secret of the personality. Everything can be explained from this central point, and all my words relate to this one theme.[9]

Jung's self-reflection reverberates with the sentiment Barbara Newman expresses about Hildegard when she says, "what had begun as a child's idiosyncrasy, now became a prophetic mission."[10] Clearly, Hildegard and Jung shared the characteristics of being precocious and unusual children. They also shared something more. Murray Stein contends that Jung was guided in his writings by an unseen hand, a largely unconscious *spiritus rector* (guiding spirit). This guiding spirit prompted his strong urge to heal Christianity, which led him to the very heart of the tradition's ailments and deepened his desire to offer it his psychotherapeutic help.[11] In many ways, eight centuries earlier Hildegard was motivated by a similar impulse and guided by a similar spirit, the *umbra viventis lucis:* the Living Light within her soul (sometimes referred to as shade of shadow of the Living Light), a spiritual inseeing and reflection of the Living Light happening in full consciousness and in multicolor brilliance accompanied by a "hearing within the soul."

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[9]C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffé, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage, 1989) 206.

[10]Quoted in Kienzle, 7.

[11]Stein, 17.

Jung became convinced that the unconscious was the bridge to the mystical, soul-full, dimension of the human personality. Important as it had been to discover and explore the unconscious in the interests of the mentally ill, Jung now recognized the contents of the unconscious as hosting life or death for the soul's journey to wholeness. Jung wrote: "You're quite right: the main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neurosis, but rather with the approach to the numinous."[12] Hannah comments in her biographical memoir of Jung that:

> [He] who also always needed to experience before he could accept anything, had this in mind when he made his much quoted remark: "I don't believe, I know." John Freeman had asked him (in the BBC television interview in 1959) whether he believed in God. Jung answered with that famous remark, which aroused a veritable storm of comment at the time.[13]

Jung had a lifelong preoccupation with the mysterious nature of God and experienced divine demands placed upon him since his youth. When Jung spoke of an experience of God he meant an experience in the psyche of an incomprehensible, autonomous, unpredictable force; unfathomable and one of the most certain of human experiences.[14] Encounter with the unconscious is the only available source of religious experience, according to Jung. The religious person, such as Hildegard, calls this spiritual force God and the scientist, such as Jung, calls it the unconscious. Twentieth-century theologian Paul Tillich uses the term *Ultimate Concern*. It would be Jung's commitment to the dark unconscious where the life of the soul thrives that ultimately led to his break with Sigmund Freud in 1912. Jung found the life of the unconscious richer, more complex and

[12]C.G. Jung, *Letters of C. G. Jung*, vol. 1, ed. Gerhard Adler (New York: Routledge, 1973) 377, 20 August 1945, to P. W. Martin.

[13]Barbara Hannah, *Jung, His Life and Work: A Biographical Memoir* (Boston: Shambala Publications, 1991) 124.

[14]Jung, *Memories*, 62.

valuable than Freud's one-sided conviction that the unconscious was the repository of repression, especially of sexuality.

Carl Jung grew up in the milieu of a long line of ordained ministers in the Swiss Reformed church. Jung noticed about his own father, "Now, too late, at the end of his life, he evidently saw – though did not admit – the hollowness of everything secondhand which was only 'believed' and not experienced."[15] From a young age, Jung struggled with a "veneer" Christianity.

Hildegard's writings are replete with her chastisement of Christian leaders about their lax approach to the affairs of the world and church. She felt compelled to speak about the negligence that riddled the pastoral care of the people of Christ's church and indeed, the web of all creation. She chided kings and bishops for figuratively and literally falling asleep to the troubles of their times.[16]

The abstract, unapproachable God preached by religious leaders left Jung cold, as did a superficial unexamined experience of the Divine. Jung deplored the fact that the Christian religion had a fatal tendency to leave its adherents childish.[17] The church in Jung's era seemed to promote holding individuals in childhood when the only way to grow beyond an infantile approach to life and faith was to have eventually all the fragments of one's life integrated with an adult consciousness. The encouragement to remain infantile permitted people to hoist the burden of their own coming to consciousness onto others and to abdicate responsibility for mature adulthood.

Hildegard referred to coming to consciousness as "waking up." For example, in a letter to Pope Anastasias IV, chiding the leadership of her time she wrote, "Wake up from the slumber of tolerance and fatigue in discernment!"[18] In so many words, this

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[15]Hannah, 55.

[16]Régine Pernoud, *Hildegard of Bingen: Inspired Conscience of the Twelfth Century* (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1998) 13.

[17]Hannah, 73).

[18]Renate Craine, *Hildegard: Prophet of the Cosmic Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1997) 29.

same challenge could have and did come from the mouth and pen of C. G. Jung.[19]

Jung was concerned with an increasingly fragmented Western culture and an unevolved, one-sided Christian tradition. Hildegard did her work from within church structures and Christian doctrine, *intra ecclesiam*, while Jung engaged his theorizing as an empirical scientist, *extra ecclesiam*. Yet, as Lammers notes, "that God is ultimately unknowable in human terms has never stopped a theologian, nor did it stop C. G. Jung."[20] Jung grappled with the failure of Christianity in modernity – the failure of its tradition, beliefs, symbols, and practices to hold meaning for the individual and collective personality and intellectual life of human beings in the modern era. The symbols of religious faith in the modern era became "obscure anachronisms" that no longer commanded any "quickening of the spirit."[21]

In a letter dated June 28, 1959, Jung writes:

> My work deals in the main with the transformation of Christian tenets within the Christian era. … Developments on such a scale are only possible when the individual, i.e., many individuals, are transforming themselves in their personal psychological life, a fact which cannot take place without a profound shaking up of one's mental peace.[22]

Jung appreciated this rattling of mental stasis and quickening of the spirit in the transformational life of medieval Hildegard and found in her a touchstone for his own dauntless probing into the depths of human personality. "From the viewpoint of dogmatic Christianity," Aniela Jaffé writes, "Jung

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[19]See Jung, *Letters*, 345-50.

[20]Ann Conrad Lammers, *In God's Shadow: The Collaboration of Victor White and C. G. Jung* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994) 132.

[21]Ann Belford Ulanov, *Religion and the Spiritual in Carl Jung* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999) 11.

[22]Jung, Letters, 510-11.

was distinctly an 'outsider.'"[23] Jaffé notes that much of the public critique of his writings grieved him and he expressed the disappointment of an investigator who felt that his religious ideas were not accurately understood. "More than once," Jaffé comments, Jung said grimly, "They would have burned me as a heretic in the Middle Ages!"[24] One wonders if Hildegard's escaping such a fate provided some consolation to Jung. Only since his death in 1961 have theologians in increasing number begun to say that Jung was indubitably an outstanding figure in the religious history of the century.

What seems most salient to the creative synergy between twelfth-century Hildegard von Bingen and twentieth-century Carl Jung is best highlighted by the lush discoveries in the 2009 publication of Jung's *Red Book.* This book has remarkable similarities to Hildegard's multimedia illuminated manuscript of 26 visions with theological commentary, *Scivias.* Though not similar in actual content, they are strikingly sympathetic in style, imagination, artistry, and deep reflection on the interplay of light and shadow within the life of the unconscious. It is to these synchronicities that attention will now be turned.

Synchronicities

It is not a leap of the mind or imagination to call Hildegard's *Scivias* an explosion from the unconscious, filled with images, new insights, symbols, and manifestations of the inner experience of encounter with the numinous. Hildegard ended her self-imposed silence to "put her hand to writing" when she was 43 years old and completed the *Scivias* in 1152 when she was 53. Hildegard's theology in pictures, which arose from her own active imagination and inner dialogue, was inspired by a force beyond her own will, the *umbra viventis lucis*. From 1163 to 1174, Hildegard continued her writing and completed her most mature work, the *Book of Divine Works,* which explores her

[23]*Ibid.*, x.
[24]*Ibid*., xi.

cosmology in which she discloses the interdependency of humanity and creation as related to God and each other.

Jung's *Red Book,* an experiment in image and print recorded from 1913 to 1930, is strikingly resonant with Hildegard's creative style in *Scivias* and *Book of Divine Works.* Jung put his hand to the artistry of the *Red Book* when he was 38 and left off working on it at age 55. Of this time Jung said, "The years … when I pursued the inner images, were the most important time of my life. Everything else is to be derived from this. … My entire life consisted in elaborating what had burst forth from the unconscious and flooded me like an enigmatic stream and threatened to break me. That was the stuff and material for more than only one life. … But the numinous beginning, which contained everything, was then."[25]

Hildegard's "hearing in the soul" and its consequent outpouring in image and word has parallel with Jung. Midlife was a significant time of productivity and fearless searching for both Hildegard and Jung. Both Hildegard and Jung, while living in the spirit of their times, experienced a beckoning to know the spirit of the depth. In the Introduction to the *Red Book,* Sonu Shamdasani notes:

> The overall theme of the book is how Jung regains his soul and overcomes the contemporary malaise of spiritual alienation. This breach is ultimately healed by the rebirth of a new image of God in the soul and developing a worldview in the form of a psychological and theological cosmology.[26]

In visual and print artistry, the *Red Book* depicts Jung's process of individuation, the transformation and integration of personality. One could say the same for Hildegard's intent and the outcomes she achieved in the *Scivias* and the *Book of Divine Works.*

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[25]C.G. Jung, *The Red Book*, ed. Sonu Shamdasani (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009) unnumbered page, front matter.

[26]*Ibid*., 207.

The synchronicities between Hildegard and Jung are abundant and provide a frame of reference for their comparable forays into the mysteries of the dark side of the human and the divine personality. They were both fearless intellectual and spiritual adventurers. Both lived and wrote in unsettled times, times where the presence of evil was palpable. Both spoke of the activity of the Antichrist in their times and both believed destructive forces arose from within the church as well as from without.

They each lived in an era in which the church suffered a loss of its true spiritual authority as it fell into complicity with power-mongers and failed to come to terms with itself and its own renewal. Jung refers to this reality of secular and religious unconsciousness as the dangerous failure to come to terms with the shadow in personal and collective human personality. Left unattended and unaddressed, the shadow plays out destructively, as Hildegard and Jung both witnessed time and again. Toward the end of his life Jung was asked if civilization would survive, and he said it would if enough people began to take responsibility for their inner lives, for living consciously. Hildegard was saying the same thing eight hundred years earlier.

Hildegard and Jung each nourished an interior visionary life that was accompanied by illness and the experience of tasks imposed from within that compelled action. Hildegard lived in actual medieval monasteries, building an independent monastery at Rupertsburg from the ground up. Jung built his tower of stone at Bollingen, which provided him a sanctuary where he was most deeply himself. On building the tower Jung wrote, "I must catch up with a piece of the Middle Ages – within myself."[27] In a hymn, Hildegard describes her encounter with the numinous with her now famous phrase: "I stretch out my hand to God, so that I am sustained and carried ever so lightly like a feather on the breadth of God." Jung writes, "Like every other being, I am a

[27] *Ibid*., 216.

splinter of the infinite deity."[28] There is a transconsciousness to their experience of the Holy. The benign images of feathers and splinters did not, however, provide cover for the dreadfully serious experience of coming face to face with God's terrifying side. They both understood that there is no maturity without solitude and the encounter with its fiery energies. While Jung said the following, it could just as well have been spoken by Hildegard: "The Divine Presence is more than anything else … This is the only thing that really matters … I wanted proof of a living Spirit and I got it. Don't ask me at what a price."[29]

It is interesting to note that the history of Hildegard's symptoms and her interpretation of her pain and suffering changed as her life developed. Her awakening in her forties inaugurated a new way for her to experience the physical and spiritual events associated with her visionary life. Hildegard named the pain associated with her visions *pressura* – a term that conveys her sense of physical discomfort, as well as the suffering associated with the psychological pressure to break the silence she maintained regarding her secret and the fears of potential social disapproval and mockery.[30] Jung also was subject to the deeply personal and public costs of company with Divine Presence. In a letter to Father Victor White, Jung wrote about the burdens imposed upon one who seriously entertains the contents of the unconscious. He said, "The more you know of it, the greater and heavier becomes your moral burden, because the unconscious contents transform themselves into your individual tasks and duties as soon as they become conscious."[31]

Both Hildegard and Jung worked with and through the burden until they found expression for the numinous sights and sounds arising from their interior lives. Hildegard comments in an autobiographical section of her *Vita* that she was rarely at rest.

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[28]Jung, *Memories*, 4.

[29]Jung, *Letters*, 492.

[30]Charles Burnett and Peter Dronke, eds. *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of Her Thought and Art (*London: Warburg Institute, 1998) 198-9.

[31]Jung, *Letters*, 172.

She says, "I was worn out in many tribulations. Then God rained the dew of his grace over me" and spoke intimately.[32] When the visionary and pioneering life work of this twelfth century woman and twentieth century man are brought into dialogue, they continue to ignite new sparks of insight into the pathway to the numinous mystery of the life of the soul. Their visionary experiences are treated here similarly to the ideas of Kent Kraft, as authentic encounters with holy mystery, explosions from the unconscious, *and* carefully cultivated efforts to interpret their inner experience as containing messages of profound meaning beyond the personal.[33] In their legacy one finds the story of encounter with a God of day and of darkness.

Interplay of Light and Dark in the Soul's Journey

Two of the seven references Jung makes to Hildegard in his *Collected Works* have to do with interpreting the inner experience of the numinous. Jung says:

> The phenomenon itself, the vision of light, is an experience common to many mystics, and one that is undoubtedly of the greatest significance, because at all times and places it proves to be something unconditioned and absolute, a combination of supreme power and profound meaning. Hildegard of Bingen, an outstanding personality quite apart from her mysticism, writes in much the same way of her central vision:
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> > Since my childhood I have always seen a light in my soul, but not with the outer eyes, nor through the thoughts of my heart; neither do the five outer senses take part in the vision … The light I perceive is not of a local kind, but is much brighter than the cloud which supports the sun. I

[32]Gottfried and Theodoric, 64.

[33]Katharina M. Wilson, ed., *Medieval Women Writers* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1984) 119.

> cannot distinguish height, breadth, or length of it … what I see or learn in such a vision stays long in my memory. I see, hear, and know in the same moment … I cannot recognize any sort of form in this light, although I sometimes see in it another light that is knows to me as the living light … While I am enjoying the spectacle of this light, all sadness and sorrow vanish from my memory.

> I myself know a few individuals who have had personal experience with this phenomenon. So far as I have been able to understand it, it seems to have to do with an acute state of consciousness, as intense as it is abstract, a "detached" consciousness, which, Hildegard implies, brings into awareness areas of psychic happenings ordinarily covered in darkness … As a rule the phenomenon is spontaneous, coming and going on its own initiative. Its effect is astonishing in that it almost always brings about a solution of psychic complications and frees the inner personality from emotional and intellectual entanglements, thus creating a unity of being which is universally felt as "liberation."[34]

Jung was impressed with Hildegard as a historical witness to the fact that one can endure the pain and suffering of "coming into the Living Light" and remain a whole personality, meaning not becoming split, fragmented, or psychotic.[35] In short, she hosted divine energies without going crazy. Hildegard and Jung merge in the conviction that suffering is endemic to the human spiritual experience; the only way to overcome it is to endure its darkness.

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[34]C.G. Jung, "Commentary on 'The Secret of the Golden Flower,'" 1957, in *Collected Works* (hereafter cited as CW), vol. 13 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967) par. 41-44, 27-28.

[35]Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" in *CW*, vol. 9I, par. 35.

Hidden within every symptom is a spiritual longing. The unconscious in human personality yearns to be drawn into the light, yet at the same time the forces of the ego and persona will resist the often-painful claims it places upon consciousness to deal with the secrets within. Many persons pass through such potentially transforming experiences but fail to stay with them long enough to confront the inner turmoil and psychic suffering that accompany the inbreaking of the divine and thus to emerge with greater wholeness of self and direction in life.

Confrontation with the Unconscious

By the time Jung was an adolescent, he felt isolated from others due to his lushly imaginative inner life, which was of little interest to his parents, relatives, and friends. Yet, Jung writes, "it never occurred to me that I might be crazy, for the light and darkness of God seemed to me facts that could be understood even though they opposed my feelings."[36] Jung experienced crises similar to Hildegard's throughout his life: physically debilitating illness with severe inner disturbances followed by the experience of relief and restoration when he became aware of what it was he needed to express, which often occurred in symbolic formulation, such as paintings of mandalas, or in clarification of concepts and articulation of new psychological theory.

At age 69, Jung had a visionary experience during a critical illness. This encounter with the unconscious subjected him to the devastating emotions of embarking on the dark path to God referred to in mystical spirituality as the *via negativa* or dark night of the soul. The phenomenon of *la noche oscura* (from the Spanish, meaning the dark or obscured night) finds its roots in the writings of the sixteenth-century Spanish Carmelite reformers and mystics John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, who illumine the painfully mysterious dark night that brings

[36]Stein, 78.

spiritual transformation.[37] It is important to have a sense of this experience in order to appreciate what Jung encountered while in a weakened, vulnerable condition. According to this mystical tradition, it is not uncommon for those who live the examined life to find themselves in seasons where the path to wellbeing is obscured.

Both Hildegard and Jung describe the dark night of the impending Living Light as similar to the biblical Jacob wrestling through the night with the angel of God (Genesis 32:24-32). This wearying and terrifying sacred wrestling results in a radical kind of yielding to God that affects all the exterior and interior senses; it is the placing of the whole self in relationship with *Mysterium.* It is a conversion experience whereby the sickness and suffering create the receptive, vulnerable, humble condition under which the unconscious erupts and consciousness is radically awakened; the road to the depths opens. Paradoxically, as both Jung and Hildegard report, the culmination of the process brings a sense of joy, contentment, clarity, humility, wholeness, and empowerment that eludes words. To face the absolute unique giftedness of one's existence and accept its finitude creates the condition whereby one's consciousness can be awakened to the infinite. It is important to note here that experiencing the dark night of the soul is not the same as the dark side of God.

Hildegard's novelty of thought and imaginative inventiveness, which made her one of the major creative figures of the twelfth century, appealed to Jung. She was, as musicologist Christopher Page said, a remarkable woman in an age of remarkable men.[38] She was able to transcend conventional expectations imposed by centuries of female subordination and

[37]See Gerald G. May, *The Dark Night of the Soul* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2004 and Thomas Moore, *Dark Nights of the Soul* (New York: Gotham Books, 2004).

[38]Quoted in Carmen Acevedo Butcher, *Hildegard of Bingen: A Spiritual Reader* (Brewster, Mass.: Paraclete Press, 2007) xi.

the churchmen of her own era.[39] Her theology and science are rich in positive references to gestation, motherhood, the womb, sexuality, and *viriditas*, which she saw as the feminine life principle of moist greenness, fertility, and lushness.

In Hildegard's visions, the Godhead is depicted symbolically, often by the mere presence of the color gold or as a feminine figure and, at other times, as a bearded masculine figure. Her use of color and gender balance opens the image of God and God's nature to a theologically and symbolically rich multidimensionalism. The positive feminine in Hildegard's visions and her commitment to the manifestation of what has come to be called the feminine divine provide an interesting window into some of the ways she foreshadowed the important role that the dark feminine plays in Jungian depth psychology.

The Trinitarian Fourth and the Feminine Darkness

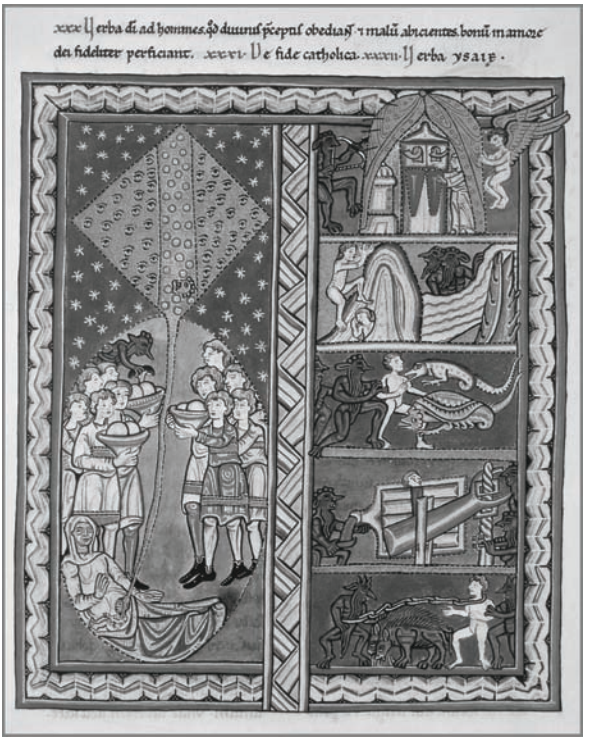
Section 5 of *Civilization in Transition* is an essay Jung titled "Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies." In this essay, he explores unidentified flying objects (UFOs) as the psychological consequence of unconscious content, UFOs as a psychological phenomenon. He asks, "What is the meaning of such a rumour at the present time? What future developments are being prepared in the unconscious of modern man?"[40] Jung explores artists' renderings of UFOs and points out that they are rich with symbols, suggesting that UFOs are subliminal contents in the process of becoming visible, that they are, in a word, archetypal figures.[41] In a somewhat offbeat way, Jung, while offering an interpretation of the UFO phenomenon, discusses a synchronicity with an illumination by Hildegard (see figure 1)

[39]Constant Mews, "Encountering Hildegard: Between Apocalypse and the New Age" in Louise D'Arcens and Juanita Feros Ruys, eds., *Maistresse of My Wit: Medieval Women, Modern Scholars, Making the Middle Ages*, vol. 7 (Turnout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2004) 90 .

[40]C.G. Jung, "Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies," 1958, in *CW*, vol. 10, par. 731.

[41]*Ibid*., par. 747.

that treats quaternity in the Trinity: the feminine dimension adds the fourth that creates true unity in God.



Scivias (*Know the ways of the Lord)* by Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179). The book, *Codex Rupertsberg*, disappeared during World War II. Left: God is present when a child is born. Right: Stages of life ending under God's tent. [Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, N.Y.]

Before exploring Jung's reference to Hildegard's "remarkable symbolism" in the illumination from the *Scivias*, a further explanation is in order. This illumination has been given many titles, including "God is present when a child is born / stages of life under God's tent" and "Body and Soul." Jung

identifies it as "The Quickening of the Child in the Womb." This rich image exemplifies how Hildegard thought it better to work with symbols than the naked word. This is yet another reason why Hildegard appealed to Jung. He longed for all Christian doctrine to be recast in symbolic mode so that theology would enjoy a thorough appreciation of how symbol functioned in the human psyche. Hildegard was evidently naturally inclined in that direction. It is obvious from the complexity of her visions and the commentary associated with each image that it is not always easy to grasp the fullness of her theological and spiritual treatments of various themes.

In this instance, Hildegard sees a golden kite-shaped figure with many open eyes illuminating the star-filled sky. The kite-like part of the image, filled with stars, stands for the knowledge of God, the tail of the kite for the Wisdom of God (Christ incarnate). Its flaming brilliance signifies the mystery of God's eternal counsel, which extends its gaze to the four corners of the earth – north, south, east, and west – and clearly sees all, good *and* evil. From the center of the Godhead, the Mystery of the Trinity, a golden cord flows into the egg-shaped image below it. Like an umbilical cord, it connects God's transcendence to the womb of the woman pregnant with child.

In this marvelous vision of the four-sided Trinity, representing the four corners of the world, the golden umbilical cord reaches into the womb of the woman (prototype of Mary) to vivify the baby resting, clothed by and within the woman's womb. A womb clothes divinity. There is maternity in the Trinity. This interpretation is qualified by those who see the maternity depicted here is not *in* God but in the woman giving birth on earth. Others, such as Carolyn Sur, amplify Hildegard's words to mean that as divine personhood enters the soul at birth, it enters the body, too. Mary's (the woman's) physical motherhood is the instrument of the delivery of Christ into his humanity, which in turn, becomes the medium of his divinity. Divinity is aimed at humanity; humanity is connected to divinity. The divine motherhood, womb of the Word made flesh, is no

less consequential than the divine fatherhood of God.[42] Father and mother are reunited.

The panels on the side are read from the bottom up and touch upon the struggle of the soul to "set up its tent," meaning, biblically speaking, the journey of the soul seeking to dwell in peace in the Holy Presence. Along with maternity in divinity, the illumination includes the soul's engagement with the forces of evil inherent in the journey to wholeness. Hildegard speaks to the ensouled human being who must grow up to struggle against the devil. As Jung notes, "the devil, too, has a hand in the game."[43] This is a significant intersection for Hildegard and Jung. The values of consciousness in the spiritual patriarchal worldview include Father-God, Spirit (reason), and Christ. Excluded are femaleness, body, and Satan – the dark side. Lammers notes:

> Jung also claims that the classic doctrine of the Trinity over-spiritualizes, over-masculinizes, and over-simplifies the account of God's nature, leaving material, feminine, and negative aspects of human experience out of relationship to the divine. Because not only evil but all these other aspects of universal experience have been cut off from participation in the divine nature, Jung calls the Trinity, the threefold symbol, psychologically incomplete.[44]

In this regard, Hildegard, at the end of *Scivias* 1.4, is not a Jungian as she reiterates her Christian faith regarding the Trinity. In Hildegard's quaternity, the spirit moves to the unity of male/female, body/spirit, and Christ (good)/Satan (evil). Interestingly, Hildegard's illumination symbolically illustrates important aspects of Jung's vision of psychological wholeness, while not supporting Jung's notion of quaternity in the Trinity. Here Hildegard does, however, give witness to her critique of

[42]Sur, 138.
[43]Jung, *Flying Saucers*, par. 769.
[44]Lammers, 159.

dualism, which insisted on an eternal chasm between divinity and humanity. She also offers a theological anthropology that is decidedly pro-female and could be read as hinting at something more within the Trinity. As Carolyn Sur notes:

> In medieval numerology a special significance is given to the number four. In the interpretations of number symbolism, four, not three, represents completeness. Without the fourth dimension, the Trinity, in medieval numerology, is incomplete. Thus, the significance of the reality in this work is, that without the feminine dimension in the Godhead — the dimension that motherhood brings — the Trinity, in this sense, is an incomplete representation of humanity created male and female in the image of God.[45]

Jung was clearly intrigued by how this medieval vision illustrated the fourness important to a psychological vision based on completeness and the restoration of the feminine dimension to the Godhead. It is important to note that this is Jung's "sense" of the meaning of Hildegard's illumination. Hildegard scholars often exegete the text to say that quaternity refers to the extent of God's knowledge, not to God's nature. The missing "fourth" for Jung, however, is what the Western church overtly or covertly marked as inferior: matter, flesh, nature, the feminine, and evil. Jung's effort to "treat" the maladies besetting Christianity included seeking its redemption from the partialness that he saw exemplified in the suppression of the feminine and stubborn fixation on a dualistic worldview.

Lammers ascribes a practical dimension to Jung's argument: "Until all the opposites are raised symbolically to consciousness in the Godhead, there will be no transcendent model of wholeness upon which human beings can consciously and deliberately frame their inner lives."[46] It is important to note

[45]Sur, 154.
[46]Lammers, 160.

that Jung sometimes blurred the lines between doctrinal theology and therapy, acting as theologian more than psychologist. In doing so, he was specifically seeking a therapeutic design for a Christianity whose practical life could produce healing in fractured human souls. Jung saw the normative doctrine of the Trinity as having a central error: a procession of masculine Gods-in-One, from which the feminine element is missing. Radical feminist theologian Mary Daly expressed it this way:

> [Christianity's] symbol of processions is the all-male trinity itself. Of obvious significance here is the fact that this is an image of the procession of the divine son from the divine father (no mother or daughter involved). In this symbol the first person, the father, is the origin who thinks forth the second person, the son, the word, who is the perfect image of himself, who is "co-eternal" and "consubstantial," that is identical in essence. So total is their union that their "mutual love" is expressed by the procession (known as "spiration") of a third person called the "Holy Spirit," whose proper name is Love. This naming of "the three Divine Persons" is the paradigmatic model for the pseudogeneric term *person*, excluding all female mythic presence, denying female reality in the cosmos.[47]

By correcting the missing fourth from the procession of divine becoming, a new symbolic shift takes place that recognizes the completion of the Three in Four. This new symbolic shift works to heal the rift between spirit and matter that would help with the evolution of Christianity.[48] According to Vera Von Der Heydt, in an engaging chapter called "Psychological Implications of the Dogma of the Assumption" (a dogma proclaimed in 1950), "Eve is symbolic of the human attempt towards greater consciousness and the search for the ego,

[47]Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978) 37-8.

[48]Stein, 158.

whereas Mary represents the birth of the Self. In this regard, Eve and Mary are our two mothers: each other's opposite side. Together they generate the archetype of the *Magna Mater,* the sacred earth mother of us all."[49] Stein suggests that by including the *body* of the Virgin, Christianity was expanding away from a purely spiritual (masculine) conception of God toward a symbolic image that would include human flesh and its vulnerabilities within the doctrine of God.[50] This again is a depth psychological rendering; theologically speaking, such was not intended by Rome, or most likely not by Hildegard. It is worth considering, however, that Hildegard did envision the Trinity as four-sided and Jung took notice. This remains productive of further theological and pastoral considerations.

Jung devotes three pages in "Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies" to discussing the remarkable symbolism of "The Quickening of the Child in the Womb," focusing on Hildegard's explication of "countless eyes" and the transcultural notion of the divine eye motif. In addition, Jung explores at some length the meaning of "the squareness of the Holy Ghost." He says:

> The square, being a quaternity, is a totality symbol in alchemy. Having four corners it signifies the earth, whereas a circular form is attributed to the spirit. Earth is feminine, spirit masculine. The square as a symbol of the spiritual world is certainly most unusual, but becomes more intelligible when we take Hildegard's sex into account. This remarkable symbolism is reflected in the squaring of the circle – another *coniunctio oppositoru* [conjunction/reconciliation of opposites].[51]

[49]Vera Von Der Heydt, *Prospects for the Soul: Soundings in Jungian Psychology and Religion* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976) 72.

[50]Stein, 124, 169.

[51]Jung, *Flying Saucers*, par. 767.

The notion of the transformational integration of the opposites is important here because Jung sees Hildegard's vision and a reinterpretation of Christian doctrine as central to the kind of new Christianity he perceived to be necessary for the vitality of the tradition and its evolution to meet the needs of modern consciousness. Mary, and through her all women, and the feminine principle is introduced into the Trinitarian life of God and thus represents a transformation of tremendous import. The hostile *oppositorum* between masculine/feminine, soul/body, and spirit/matter find *coniunctio* in an interpretation of Hildegard and reinforced, at least for Jung, in the dogma of Mary's Assumption.

Sea of Grace, Seething Lake of Fire

This brings one to the place to consider, as Jung would say, the terrible double aspect of God: a sea of grace is met by a seething lake of fire, and the light of love glows with a fierce dark heat.52 This is different from the dark night of the soul. Here one explores the God of Exodus who exhorts Moses to "stretch out your hand toward heaven so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt" (Exodus 10:21-23a; cf. 12:29-30, italics added). What does one make of the cry of Lamentations, "Do not the good and the bad both go out from the mouth of the Most High?" (Lam. 3:38, italics added).

Jung expounds upon the dark dimension of the nature of God found in the Book of Job in his controversial exegesis "Answer to Job," which was published on the heels of the promulgation of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary. While the First Letter of John records, "God is light; in him there is no darkness (I John 1:5, 7, italics added), Jung experienced an inner urge to reconcile this with the tortuous story of Job and the prophetic utterance, "I *form the light and create darkness*; I

[52]C.G. Jung, "Answer to Job," 1952, in *CW,* vol. 11, par. 733.

make peace and create evil: I the Lord *do all these things*" (Isaiah 45:7, italics added).

In a letter to Aniela Jaffé, Jung writes, "If there is anything like the spirit seizing one by the scruff of the neck, it was the way this book came into being."[53] Its reception had the same impact on many of his peers in the Catholic faith, especially his trusted Dominican colleague, Fr. Victor White, who was one of the first clergymen to see the importance of Jung's work for the renewal of Christianity. For Jung, evil must be regarded as part of God and not as something extraneous for which the human person is alone responsible. According to Lammers, "Jung flatly disagrees with the orthodox depiction of God as a perfectly good, unchanging, unified being. Jung's God-image includes unfinished work, change, development, unconsciousness, and even moral contradictions."[54]

In short, Jung took God to task in "Answer to Job," revealing a God who knew no moderation in his emotions, a God of rage and jealousy, loving kindness along with cruelty, creative power along with destructiveness.[55] This is the vexing problem of theodicy for religious people. Jung grounds this conviction in examining the God at work in the Book of Job. The Book of Job is not a contest between God and Satan but between God and Job.[56] The great archaic gods of the myths did not demand anything more from humans than the sacrifices due the gods. Father Zeus did not want to do anything with humans because he had no plans for them. Father Zeus was a figure but not a personality.[57]

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[53]Jung, *Letters*, 20.

[54]Lammers, 81.

[55]Jung, *Job*, par. 560.

[56]The interpretation of Job that follows includes, along with Jung's analysis, a novel, alternative reading of Job proposed by Troy Martin, biblical studies professor, Saint Xavier University, Chicago. This approach to Job will be explored in our co-authored book *Forgiving God: Healing Fractures in the Divine/Human Relationship* (forthcoming).

[57]*Ibid*., par. 568.

People of early antiquity expected divine inconsistencies.[58] Yahweh, on the other hand, was interested in human beings. Jung reminds, "Human beings were a matter of first-rate importance to him."[59] Yahweh was above all a relational God whose preferred covenantal character exemplifies the mutuality within the divine/human relationship. The interpersonal and moral became part of a religious covenant relationship.

Jung is profoundly flummoxed over God's unwarranted cruel behavior toward the legendary upright and patient Job. During the trials inflicted without justification upon Job, "Yahweh displays no compunction, remorse or compassion, but only ruthlessness and brutality."[60] Yahweh rides roughshod over Job's human dignity.[61] God seemingly accepts shared responsibility with Satan for "ruining Job without cause." (Job 2:3). Job's steadfastness does nothing to mollify Yahweh, "hence Satan's insinuations fall on fertile ground when he drips his doubt about Job's faithfulness into the paternal ear."[62] Bildad, Job's friend, insists that God is all powerful, punishes only the wicked and leaves the righteous intact (Job 8).

This is the prevailing understanding of God's nature from the Book of Deuteronomy 28: the good are blessed and the evil are cursed. Yahweh can unloose the forces of blessing (fecundity) into the world and can also unleash the forces of curse (death), such as disease, pestilence, drought, wild animals, sword, and famine. Job keeps insisting that he has done nothing to warrant God's punishment.

Jung demands to know why God did not consult God's own omniscience with respect to Job's true character[63] while "Job, by his insistence on bringing his case before God, even without hope of a healing, had stood his ground and thus created the very

[58] *Ibid*., par. 571.
[59] *Ibid*., par. 568.
[60] *Ibid*., par. 581.
[61] *Ibid*., par. 636.
[62] *Ibid*., par. 622.
[63] *Ibid*., par. 579.

obstacle that forced God to reveal his true nature."[64] Job takes God to trial and holds God accountable to make present the evidence for Job deserving the suffering meted out to him. God has pushed Job to his human limits and Job's relationship with God is now riddled with fear and pain, which he can no longer endure.

God comes into the scene and speaks to Job "out of the whirlwind" (Job 38:1). It is a tour de force whereby God challenges Job for putting an all-powerful God on trial. Jung comments:

> Who is this that darkens counsel by words without insight (Job 38:2)? In view of the subsequent words of Yahweh, one must really ask oneself: Who is darkening what counsel? The only dark thing here is how Yahweh ever came to make a bet with Satan. It is certainly not Job who has darkened anything…The answer to Yahweh's conundrum is therefore: it is Yahweh himself who darkens his own counsel and who has no insight … For seventy-one verses he proclaims his world-creating power to his miserable victim, who seats in ashes and scratches his sores with potsherds, and who by now has had more than enough of superhuman violence.[65]

Yahweh does not "see" Job at all. Job accepts God's power and invincibility He is handling himself with integrity and tremendous discipline. One can hear Jung's growl at God's injustice, "Is it worth the lion's while to terrify a mouse?"[66] Jung rails:

> God is asked not to entice us outright into doing evil, but rather to deliver us from it. Judged by any human standards it is after all unfair, indeed extremely

[64] *Ibid*., par. 584.
[65] *Ibid*., pars. 584-5, 587.
[66] *Ibid*., par. 591.

> immoral, to entice little children into doing things that might be dangerous for them, simply in order to test their moral stamina! Especially as the difference between a child and a grown-up is immeasurably smaller than that between God and his creatures, whose moral weakness is particularly well known to him.[67]

Jung excoriates a God of goodness who is so unforgiving that he can only be appeased by human sacrifice. Jung says, "This is an insufferable incongruity which modern man can no longer swallow, for he must be blind if he does not see the glaring light it throws on the divine character, giving the lie to all talk about love and the *Summum Bonum* [supreme good]."[68]

Jung was working out his theories of the dark God without the benefit of modern scripture scholarship or new, more novel readings of the text. He likely never imagined that contemporary biblical scholarship would be more closely examining the text precisely for the same reasons that motivated him sixty years ago. Emerging scholarship is now focused on the point in the Book of Job (42:7) where there is an abrupt transition in the dialogue, suggesting it is God not Job speaking in 42: 1-7. The voice shifts from Job to God. God speaks and says that up to this time he only heard of Job but "now I see you, I know who you really are" (Job 42:5). In verse 6, God repents of wrongdoing toward Job, and then verse 7 records that "God finishes speaking." In verse 10, God offers restitution to Job and restores Job's fortunes two times over in order to follow the directions for restitution in Exodus: 22. Jung did not have the benefit of any exegetical support beyond his own renderings, yet he had the courage to name the dark side of God.

Jungian psychology contends that people become conscious through conflict and thus gain insight. In the Book of Job, according to Jung, God became conscious through the conflict with Job and God gained new insight. Job stood on morally

[67] *Ibid*., par. 651.
[68] *Ibid*., par. 689.

higher ground than God. In the end, Yahweh acknowledges that the man Job is morally superior. Yahweh repents when Job is finally really "seen" by the Divine eye. The failure of the attempt to corrupt Job changed Yahweh's nature.[69] Of this Jung says, "The encounter with the creature changes the creator."[70] In a sense, Job is God's encounter with God's own unconsciousness, and in the process God repents and changes. Divine unconsciousness is ultimately mended in God's decision to enter the human experience fully in Christ and by Christ's suffering on the cross. Christ's despairing cry from the cross is the moment that, according to Jung, "God experiences what it means to be a mortal man and drinks to the dregs what he made his faithful servant Job suffer. Here is given the answer to Job, and, clearly, this supreme moment is as divine as it is human."[71]

Jung stated in his Visions Seminars, which took place in the 1930s:

> The scandal of Yahweh's behavior toward Job is due mainly to the denial of the divine shadow. To say that the shadow is merely the absence of light is like the famous definition which optimistic people give of evil – that is it nothing but the absence of good, only a mistake. But when one sees how things develop in the world, one sees that the devil is really in there, that there is abysmal evil at work. One cannot explain the destructive tendency in the world as mere absence of good or as a mistake made in something originally good … And so our shadow really exists.[72]

The world is not a perfect place; such is the great wisdom of the biblical myth of the fall. However, it is supposed to be the place where we are planted to grow in consciousness through the inevitable conflicts we experience in living the drama we call

[69]*Ibid*., par. 617.
[70]*Ibid*., par. 686.
[71]*Ibid*., par. 647.
[72]Quoted in Lammers, 175

life. This is the way the world is: an arena of our actual living in which individuation can unfold.

In Jung's continued effort to heal Christianity by prompting the tradition to deal with its shadow, Jung called God to account for God's behavior, refusing to consider suffering a meaningless accident or to separate human events from God's divine finger in human affairs. "In this," Lammers notes, paraphrasing Aelred Squire in *Summer in the Seed* (1980), "[Jung] reveals a basic theology not much different from that of the Hebrew prophets who ascribe both good and evil to God, seeing God as the source of *all* reality."[73] Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann says that the God of Israel, the God of the prophets, is unlike the God of any scholastic theology and unlike the forces imagined in any of the vague, self-focused spiritualities of our time. He goes on to say, "Scholastic temptations in theology tend to freeze the relationship and to stifle its dynamism."[74] What counts for living the drama of life with the God of ancient Israel is performance; engaged transaction in every kind of human situation, including that which surprises and confounds.

Victor White found Jung's convictions on God's dark side more than he could integrate into his scholastic worldview. His theology was predicated on a supernatural, self-sufficient, and perfect deity. It is not surprising, then, that the Dominican priest, steeped in philosophical Thomism, could not make the transition to the sense of a more intimate, even volatile, relation of divinity and humanity, which Jung contended was the face of the human religious future. Theologian John Dourley says, "To make such a transition would have cost White his faith. His failure to make it may have cost him his life."[75] Father White died in 1960 at age 57, not long after being removed from his position at Oxford due to his perceived allegiance with Jung's heretical ideas on God.

[73]Lammers, 188, italics added.

[74]Walter Brueggemann, *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009) 16.

[75]John. P. Dourley, *A Strategy for a Loss of Faith: Jung's Proposal* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1992) 41.

Others would follow who, like White, could not integrate Jung's perspectives on a divine demonic energy into a Christian theology. Many found Jung's position an affront to Christian sensibilities whereby any genuine experience of goodness suggests an immediate watching for the other, evil shoe to drop, since evil cannot be far behind God's goodness and such is the ever-turning, rather grim wheel of life. In "Answer to Job," Jung makes the confession that God is as malicious as God is strengthening; God intends, in equal measure, both human well being and capricious devastation.[76]

One may prefer a different God, and indeed God's personality exceeds the human fragile grasp. Yet, the biblical God interacts with God's creatures as the means to demonstrate who they really are. The biblical God is a character in an unfolding drama. God is a relational figure, often unpredictable and unsettling, in a narrative where God and humans interact, demonstrating who they really are by the way they behave in the living of the actual drama of their daily existence.

Embedded in this dialogue is the conviction that any present trouble is not a final destiny.[77] Life's painful struggles cannot be avoided. No one is exempt. Enlightenment rationality, in its uncriticized form, teaches that with enough reason and resources, brokenness can be avoided.[78] In such ideology there are no genuinely broken people. Often the Christian church, wrapped in denial, colludes in this illusion. Failing to take seriously the demands of the unconscious, collective reality collapses into an egoistic despair engendering a very large collective shadow filled with unresolved negativities of the most brutal kind. Israel refused such a reading of reality.

The biblical commentators in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* note, "Although Yahweh is said to be the author of both good and evil, evil is no giant swaggering ruthlessly

[76]John A. Sanford, *Jung and the Problem and Evil: The Strange Trail of Mr. Hyde* (Boston: Sigo Press, 1987) 110-15.
[77]Brueggemann, 42.
[78]*Ibid.*, 172.

through the world; somehow it accomplishes God's will for Israel (Amos 3:6, 4:13; Isaiah 10:5-20; Judges 2:6-3:6)."[79] Writing "Answer to Job" was inevitable for Jung and he did so without the scholarly tools of biblical exegesis which mark the years since his death. It was the unsettling God he knew that reverberates through his remark, "The Divine Presence is more than anything else . . . This is the only thing that really matters … I wanted proof of a living Spirit and I got it. Don't ask me at what a price."[80]

Hildegard, Jung, and the Dark God

Hildegard possessed an almost uncanny awareness of the seething lake of fire that was as present in the spiritual life as the reality of the sea of grace. This may be due to a number of factors. Hildegard resisted an impending split between the natural and supernatural worlds. Her God was viscerally alive, permitting "the wicked spirit" to cleanse humanity of its arrogance.[81] In addition, the era of crusades waged in the name of the Christian God and the growing corruption of the institutional church compelled her mission toward reform. She experienced the suffering that the failures of Christianity caused as she listened to and counseled countless people who sought her wisdom, and she knew well the medical, spiritual, sexual, familial, and economic predicaments of ordinary folks.

While Hildegard was outspoken regarding various heretical groups of her time, such as the Cathars, and initially experienced such groups as manifesting the Antichrist, in her later years she experienced the forces of the Antichrist as being within the ecclesial system and embodied in actual lives of the custodians of that tradition. Evil and its symbolic agent, Diabolus (Satan), form a central feature of the Christian religious experience. Evil was no stranger to Hildegard; her *Play of the Forces (Virtues)*

[79]*The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990) 337.

[80]Jung, *Letters*, 492.

[81]Gottfried and Theodoric, 82.

(1152) and *Book of Life's Merits* (1163) disclose the demonic forces as arising from within the human personality.

Speaking more psychologically than theologically, Hildegard would conspire to a certain extent with Jung in accepting the reality that the forces of good and evil must be ultimately reconciled within the source from which they spring.[82] "To put it theologically," John Sanford says, "we could say that evil is allowed by God's plan but does not express God's intent."[83] Hildegard never theologized, as did Jung, about the shadow-in-God but she certainly was convinced about the close proximity of the dark energies or forces. Hildegard is orthodox in this regard: evil is not ontologically in God. Interestingly, one may see in her Trinitarian illumination the clear presence of the demonic in the right panel where the little demon lurks, as well as the presence of the demon as fiery forces of both creativity and destructiveness at play in the human journey into God. She spoke of God "permitting Satan to penetrate Job's whole body with horror," but doing so while "God was guarding his soul and did not permit Satan to touch it for Job had not lost faith in God."[84]

For Jung, good needs evil in order to exist and each comes into being by contrast with the other. The forces carry value-laden dissimilarity and must be harmonized not denied, avoided, or projected out from one person to another or onto other cultures, religions, or the world stage. Both Hildegard and Jung shared a conviction that devilry inhabits the self. For Jung, God possessed a dark side. The dark is real for Hildegard but there is no evidence to suggest she explored evil within the life of the deity, except as the aberration of the Antichrist. Yet, while allowing for this important distinction between the two, Hildegard knew an intense, demanding God whose claims upon her consciousness were exacting and costly.

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[82]Murray Stein, ed., *Jung on Evil* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) 15-16.

[83]Sanford, 155.

[84]Gottfried and Theodoric, 91.

Jung resonated with Hildegard's vibrant visionary life and understood the imposing and compelling God of her experience. Her ability to negotiate the eruptions from the unconscious, to creatively engage, interpret, and express them, provided Jung with a witness to the psychic integrity possible in facing the challenges of individuation. As easily as Jung, she could have written the following:

> I consider it my task and my duty to educate my patients and pupils to the point where they can accept the direct demand that is made upon them from within. This path is so difficult that I cannot see how the indispensable sufferings along the way could be supplanted by any kind of technical procedure. Through my study of the early Christian writings I have gained a deep and indelible impression of how dreadfully serious an experience of God is. It will be no different today.[85]

The question of theodicy is never resolved once and for all. The God of Hildegard and Jung, the biblical God, is an unsettled and unsettling character and consequently an enduring mystery for those who take seriously the dark texts, the dark experiences in life, and the dark God. Clearly, God is not a Disney character. Striving for authentic adult relationship with God requires one to abandon puerile notions of the goodness of a God who can only be a source of soothing saccharine love.

At the end of the day, how medieval Hildegard and modern Jung handled the reality of divine darkness provides insight, possibly courage, for those alive in these violently unpredictable early decades of the third millennium of Christianity. Like ancient Israel, Hildegard refused the reading of reality where God abandons people to the pit. Hildegard was steeped within the tradition where, as biblical theologian Kathleen O'Connor

[85] Jung, *Letters*, 41.

notes, the God of deliverance is always remembered and this stirs hope that is reliable despite evidence to the contrary.[86]

Hildegard speaks from this conviction in a letter she wrote in 1175 to the monk Guibert:

> Whatever I see or learn in this vision I retain for a long period of time, and store it away in my memory. And my seeing, hearing, and knowing are simultaneous, so that I learn and know at the same instant . . . But the constant infirmity I suffer sometimes makes me too weary to communicate the words and visions shown to me, but nevertheless when my spirit sees and tastes them, I am so transformed . . . that I consign all my sorrow and tribulation to oblivion.[87]

How does this marvelous and transformational transaction happen? O'Connor says that "biblical hope does not emerge from proper reasoning or new information. It is not optimism or wishful thinking. It is not a simple act of the will, a decision under human control, or a willful determination. It emerges without a clear cause like grace, without explanation, in the midst of despair and at the point of least hope. It comes from elsewhere, unbidden, illusive, uncontrollable, and surprising, given in the pit, the place of no hope."[88]

The *pressura* that Hildegard experienced was not merely a source of headaches but a source of hope, enlarging and empowering her because, as St. Paul writes, "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:3-5). While unresolved tension,

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[86]Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Press, 2002) 50.

[87]Hildegard of Bingen, *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen,* 3 vols., trans. Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 23-24.

[88]O'Connor, 57.

doubt, ambivalence, ambiguity, and intellectual confusion coexist with hope, the Hebrew and Christian traditions from which the Judeo-Christian religion stakes its claim is confident of a sure and certain hope (Hebrews 6:19).

It seems that Jung never quite got there. Everyone comes to terms with, and makes his or her own deep reconciliations with, divine paradox differently. "I don't believe, I know" is how Jung phrased his conviction. The great twentieth-century Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner, when challenged by an interviewer about his faith in the midst of the horrors of Nazism, replied, "I believe because I pray."[89] In C. G. Jung's ferociously honest, dauntless, and courageous quest to probe the dark side of human and divine personality, he could, at best, say, "Life is – or has – meaning and meaninglessness. I cherish the *anxious hope* that meaning will preponderate and win the battle."[90] There is little doubt, however, that the wise old woman from the twelfth century and the wise old man from the twentieth linger boldly into the twenty-first century as vivid reminders that we better take seriously, frighteningly seriously, the God with whom we must come to terms or face the consequences.

[89]Karl Rahner, *The Need and Blessing of Prayer* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1997) ix.

[90]Jung, *Memories*, 359, italics added.

GARMENTS OF SALVATION ON THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION IN GERTRUD'S *LEGATUS* II.16

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he feast of Candlemas has long been a favorite of mine from my childhood. I have images of carrying my candle in procession into a dark small parish church, much like an explorer coming into a cave and discovering many delights in the cave's interior, as one's eyes become accustomed to seeing in a darkened place by the light of many candles.

Gertrud, in her extended vision of Christ's incarnational mystery born within her, writes in *Legatus* II.16[1] of a transformation: from the "bundle of myrrh" (*Leg*. II.16.1, 139) and the carelessness in her devotion (*Leg*. II.16.2, 140) through an experience of the Blessed Mother's severity (*Leg*. II.16.3, 141) to the radiance of that lady's love (*Leg*. II.16.3, 1141), by which Gertrud received a deepening of the mystery of the incarnate Lord within her (*Leg*. II.16.4, 141), with all the accompanying coloration that contemplating that mystery opened up for her.

Throughout this chapter, which is a series of reflections on the Christmas celebrations extended to the feast of Candlemas

[1]Gertrud the Great of Helfta, *The Herald of God's Loving-Kindness*, Books One & Two, Cistercian Fathers 35, trans. Alexandra Barratt (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1991) 139-143. Citations from this translation will be indicated in the body of this paper with the abbreviation *Leg*. II.16, followed by the section number and page. The Latin wording is taken from Gertrude d'Helfta, *Ouvres Spirituelles*, Tome II: *Le Hêraut* (Livres I et II), trans. Pierre Doyère, *Sources chrétiennes* 139 (Paris: Les Ėditions du Cerf, 1968). Citations from the Latin text will be indicated in the body of the text with the abbreviation *Her*. II.16, followed by section and page number.

over a three year period, Gertrud "reads" or rather chants the antiphons of the feasts and prays the mystery of God's incarnate, salvific love as the mystery, in turn, enfolds her in the sights, colors and actions of the liturgy for those days. As noted in previous works, Gertrud's *Legatus* II is an experience of *lectio divina*,[2] in which key words from that monastic practice guide the reader into the prayer in which she engages. As Gertrud reflects, recollects and savors the mystery of Christ's life on the feastday in the church year, God deepens that mystery in her own heart as a kind of "lived theology."[3]

In her *lectio*, Gertrud guides the reader with verbal cues to that process: "offering special prayers" (*Leg*. II.16.2, 139); "collecting" herself, realizing, "recit[ing] prayers, being "aware," "singing" (twice), offering "praise" and "amendment of life," "confess[ing]" (*Leg*. II.16.2, 140); "remembering," "burst[ing] out" (*Leg*. II.16.3, 141); she was becoming "aware" (*Leg*. II.16.4, 141) and "bless[ing]" (*Leg*. II.16.4, 142); '"asking," seeing (*Leg*. II.16.5, 142); "struggling to praise," seeing (twice) the liturgical event in a profound way (*Leg*. II.16.6, 142); "recollect[ing]," "prais[ing]," "seeing" and "pray[ing]" (*Leg*. II.16.6, 143).[4]

Legatus II.16 opens with her recollection of two feasts of the holy Nativity, a year apart. In the first she sees "a tiny child wrapped in swaddling clothes," which she picks up from the manger (*Leg*. II.16.1, 139). I have often seen the nuns in my own community pick up the statue of the Christ-child and gently hold it in their hands and look on his face, their own faces wrapped in adoration of the God who dared to come as a child into the world. This holding of the child need not solely be interpreted literally, for Gertrud could have easily been holding the words of Luke's gospel in her memory: "[Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a

[2]Mary Forman, "Gertrud of Helfta's *Herald of Divine Love*: Revelations through *Lectio Divina*," *Magistra* 3:2 (Winter 1997) 3-27.

[3]Lillian Thomas Shank, "The Christmas Mystery in Gertrud of Helfta," *Cistercian Studies* 24.4 (1989) 331.

[4]Hereafter these verbal clues will be italicized in the body of this essay.

manger…" (Luke 2:7).[5] The imprint of Christ's incarnation on her heart (*Leg*. II.16.1, 139) calls to mind the image from the Song of Songs 1:12-13: "My lover is for me a bundle of myrrh; he will linger between my breasts. My lover is for me a cluster of cyprus from the vineyards of Engedi."[6] The myrrh is bitter-sweet, a fragrant reminder of her lover, but also myrrh is the gift offered by the magi in Matthew 2:11: "And on entering the house [the magi] saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

Just as at the beginning of Christ's earthly life he received myrrh, so also does he at the end of his life, for Mark 15:23 relates that when myrrh mixed with vinegar was offered to Jesus on the cross, he refused to drink it. Thus this opening scene lays before the reader the profound mystery of the incarnation as both a portrayal of "divine sweetness" [*divinae suavitatis*] (*Leg*. II.16.1, 139; *Her*. II.16.1, 290), but also a prefiguring of the profound suffering to which Christ's redemptive birth will lead.

In her spiritual exercise on rebirth, that is, the memorial celebration of baptism, Gertrud clearly articulates the cost of Christ's love, as symbolized in the bunch of myrrh. There she reminds her readers:

> At this point, make the sign of the holy cross on your breast and your shoulders and say: For the love of your love, make me always bear the pleasant yoke and the light burden of your precepts on my shoulders and

[5]All quotations of the Bible in English have been taken from The Catholic Study Bible [New American Bible] ed. Donald Senior et al. (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) unless otherwise noted.

[6]The English is my translation of the Vulgate, Song of Songs 1:12-13: *Fasciculus myrrhae dilectus meus mihi: Inter ubera mea commorabitur. Botrus cypri dilectus meus mihi In vineis Engaddi*. Note that the translation in Barratt has the following: "You were imprinted on my innermost heart, so that I might gather together a bundle of myrrh from all the bitter humiliations of childhood's need to linger between my breasts, and thence might press and drink from the cluster of grapes of divine sweetness in the depths of my being" (*Leg*. II.16.1, 139).

> forever wear the mystery of the sacred faith on my breast like a bunch of myrrh. Thus, may you remain crucified for me, always fixed within my heart. Amen.[7]

In her spirituality, she intended to wear the sign of Christ's suffering on her own body, where the "bunch of myrrh" [*fasciculum myrrhae*[8]] mirrors the "bundle of myrrh" [*fasciculum myrrhae, Her*. II.16.1, 290] of Christmastide. If this grace of being nourished on the mystery of divine incarnation were not enough, Gertrud in the following year received "an even nobler gift" (*Leg*. II.16.1, 139).

Once again she was at the Christmas liturgy; at the moment of the introit to the Midnight Mass, she heard the words *Dixit Dominus*. Immediately she took "a most tender and delicate little child" "from the lap of your virgin mother" and carried him to her bosom (*Leg*. II.16.2, 139). In that act of holding the Christ-child close to her heart, she remembered someone who needed her prayers before Christmas. To her consternation, she *offered special prayers* [*specialibus orationibus exhibueram*] on behalf of this person, but not with the devotion she ought and fell into carelessness and vain thoughts (*Leg*. II.16.2, 139-40; *Her*. II.16.2, 290).

Next she was led in her prayer to *collect* [*recolligerem, Her*. II.16.2, 292] herself by extending caresses to the Christ-child. The caresses were manifested as "prayers for sinners, souls in purgatory and those otherwise troubled" (*Leg*. II.16.2, 140). Afterwards, she learned about the results of her prayers, when she "decided to pray with all the departed souls in mind" [*proponerem quod in omni memoria animarum*], not just for her parents but for all those dear to God (*Leg*. II.16.2, 140; *Her*.

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[7]Gertrud the Great of Helfta, *Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Gertrud Jaron Lewis and Jack Lewis (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1989) Ex. I.159-164, p. 28. Hereafter all references to this work will be indicated by *Ex.* and the exercise number, followed by the lines of the text and page number.

[8]Gertrude d'Helfta, *Oevres Spirituelles*, Tome I: *Les Exercices*, trans. Jacques Hourlier and Albert Schmitt, *Sources chrétiennes* 127 (Paris: Les Ėditions du Cerf, 1967), *Ex*. I.163, 70. Hereafter this Latin text will be indicated by the following kind of designation in the body of the text: *Ex*. I.163, *SC* 127.70.

II.16.2, 292). She was moved to *sing* [*ad cantandum*, *Her*. II.16.2, 292] with special attentiveness to each note but realized how she neglected to be attentive in other matters, which were intended for God's *praise* [*laudabilia*, *Her*. II.16.2, 292].

In her awareness of her inattentiveness, she *confessed* [*confiteor*, *Her*. II.16.2, 292] both her neglect, but also her need of God's mercy as she prayed: "I confess to you, most kindly Father, in the bitterness of the passion of your guiltless son Jesus Christ, in whom you testified that you took greatest pleasure when you said, 'This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased'. Through him I *offer my amendment of life* [*exhibeo emendationem*] so that through him all that I have failed to do, may be made good." (*Leg*. II.16.2, 140; *Her*. II.16.2, 292). Her confession revealed a firm purpose of amendment, with the knowledge that in uniting her sorrow with that of Jesus' passion, she would be able to receive the mercy necessary to be more attentive in the future.

After her confession, she took up the extension of the Christmas mystery in "the most holy day of Candlemas" (*Leg*. II.16.3, 140). The antiphon Gertrud recited, *Cum inducerent* (*Leg*. II.16.3, 141), was actually part of the chant sung during the blessing and procession of the Candlemas liturgy, the *Responsum accepit Simeon*.[9] During this processional chant Gertrud experienced the Virgin Mother asking her "with an air of severity to give her back the dear little child of her womb as if

[9]In Margaret Winkworth's translation of Gertrude of Helfta, The Herald of Divine Love, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1993)149, FN 82, she indicates that "Gertrude may have in mind the second antiphon of the procession on February 2, which runs as follows: "Responsum accepit Simeon a Spiritu Sancto non visurum se mortem nisi videret Christum Domini: et cum inducerent Puerum in tempulum, accepit eum in ulnas suas et benedixit Deum, et dixit: Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, in pace. V. Cum inducerent puerum Jesus parentes eius, ut facerent secundum consuetudinem legis pro eo, ipse accepit eum in ulnas suas" The V., … beginning as it does with a repetition of the words "*Cum inducerent*," may explain Gertrude's mistake. Todd Ridder, "Chants for Candlemas: Accretions and Adaptations in Three Manuscripts of the 11th-12th Centuries," *Worship* 10:1 (2004) 38, sees this response present in 26 sources he consulted for the blessings and procession on Candlemas day.

[Gertrud] had not looked after [him] as well as she wished" (*Leg*. II.16.3, 141). Gertrud immediately *remembered* [*recolens*, *Her*. II.16.2, 294] that Mary was given as "reconciliation to sinners and as their hope to all people in despair" and so she *burst out* [*prorupi in haec verba*, Her. II.16.2, 294] in beseeching prayer: "O Mother of loving-kindness, surely the living spirit of mercy was given to you as your son for this purpose, that you might win mercy for all those in need of grace, and that your boundless love might cover over the multitude of our sins and shortcomings" (*Leg*. II.16.3, 141). In this prayer Gertrud has identified herself with the sinners for whom she had previously prayed on the feast of Christmas. This oration wove together several phrases from Gertrud's own spirituality, an antiphon in honor of Mary and the scripture.

"O Mother of loving-kindness" recalled the numerous references in her *Spiritual Exercises* and in the *Legatus* to the title for Jesus as "loving-kindness."[10] Mary's body contained "the living Spirit of mercy," a phrase taken from the Christmas responsory *Salve virginale… palatium*[11]; in turn, she wins mercy for all in need of grace. Likewise, the loving-kindness of her son makes her "boundless love" to "cover over the multitude of our sins and shortcomings" (*Leg*. II.16.3, 141). The mutual love enjoined on Christians in 1 Peter 4:8, to "cover a multitude of sins," becomes a plea that the mutual love and mercy of mother and son might cover sins.

With this plea, the earlier severity of the Virgin Mother's visage became a softened calm and mercy "of that kindly lady" (*Leg*. II.16.3, 141). The mother's seeming severity [*vultu severo … severitas*, *Her*. II.16.3, 294] (repeated twice) was necessary because of the evil done, but the mother's "inmost being was … brimful of love," that is, thoroughly "suffused … with the sweetness of divine love," such that her face became transformed from severity to radiance and sweetness (*Leg*. II.16.3, 141).

[10]See *Spiritual Exercises*, "Word Index," 159, s.v. loving-kindness (*pietas*); and *The Herald of God's Loving-kindness*, "Index," 183, s.v. loving-kindness).

[11]The actual responsory listed at the website "MP3 Archive Search" is *salve virginale Christi Jesu palatium*; see http://www.centrohd.com/b1017/b0085.htm.

Those in need of grace have found a "gracious intercessor," as Gertrude prayed: "May your mother's generous loving-kindness act as gracious intercessor in the presence of your mercy for all my shortcomings" (*Leg*. II.16.3, 141). This prayer repeated the earlier allusion to the mutual love of 1 Peter 4:8, which covers a multitude of Gertrud's shortcomings.

Could the radiance of Mary's face be a reflected image of the light of Candlemas, breaking through into Gertrud's presumed darkness, suffusing her with the love shared between Mother and Son? Elsewhere in *Spiritual Exercise* I, Gertrud prayed that at her life's end, "I may come to that most dulcet kernel, where in the new star of your glorified humanity, I may see the very brightest light of your very outstanding divinity, where the most beautiful rose of your mellifluous face may refresh me by its imperial radiance" (*Ex*. I.207-210, 30). Here the rose-colored visage of Christ symbolized the color of "Christ's human-divine nature,"[12] which will shine in eternal radiance on her soul, whereas in the *Legatus*, the radiant face of Christ's mother shown to Gertrud on earth assured her of the mercy and loving-kindness she still needed in her own humanity.

Then in *Legatus* II.16.4, Gertrud moved on in her meditation to a third feast of Christmas, which began where her last meditation ended, that is, with the theme of light. "Finally it became clearer than daylight that you could not contain the overflowing abundance of your sweetness. The next year, on the same holy feast, you graced me with a gift more welcome than the one I have mentioned" (*Leg*. II.16.4, 141).

This gift seemed to Gertrud to be a kind of reward for her "attentive devotion" (*Leg*. II.16.4, 141). During the reading of the Gospel for the feast, from the Nativity story in Luke 2, at the words, "She brought forth her first born son" (Luke 2:7), Mary offered to Gertrud her "loveable baby struggling with all his might to be embraced by [her]" (*Leg*. II.16.4, 141). As Gertrud took this "fragile little child" in her arms, she *became aware* [*sensi*, *Her*. II.16.4, 294] of such life-giving refreshment from the breath of the sweetly-flowing spirit coming from [his]

[12]Gertrud the Great of Helfta, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 30, FN 56.

blessed mouth," as she recalled Psalm 102:1: "All that is within me should bless your holy name" (*Leg*. II.16.4, 141).

Even though the scene is a Christmas one, it is imbued with echoes of the Candlemas liturgy. Just as Simeon "took the child in his arms and blessed God" (Luke 2:28), so did Gertrud take the Christ-child from the "spotless hands" of his "spotless mother" (*Leg*. II.16.4, 141). In his study of 11-12th century manuscripts of chants for Candlemas, Todd Ridder states:

> The mercy of God, expressed in introit and gradual, is experienced in the carrying of Christ in one's arms and bosom, an action in imitation of Mary, an action just completed in the ritual of carrying candles, and – for a fortunate few in the medieval era – an action to be completed in receiving (and thereby carrying in one's bosom) the consecrated host during the communion rite.[13]

Might the "life-giving refreshment" be viewed as the reception of communion, whereupon Gertrud experienced the breath of Christ's "sweetly flowing spirit"? Clearly communion was "life-giving" for Gertrud, for in three other places she speaks of Eucharist in just this way. In *Spiritual Exercise* I, Gertrud wrote of "receiving communion of the life-giving body and blood of the spotless Lamb, Jesus Christ" (*Ex*. I.178-79, 28). In *Legatus* I.14.2 and II.19.2, communion was referred to as "the life-giving sacrament."

The next section, *Legatus* II.16.5, was focused on the nativity feast, where Gertrud envisioned that "while [the] blessed mother was busy wrapping [Jesus] in a child's swaddling clothes, [she, Gertrud] was asking to be wrapped in them with" the child, because she did not want to be separated from him by "so much as a thin piece of cloth!" (*Leg*. II.16.5, 142). Her *repetitio* of the wrapped child and her desire to be wrapped with him served as an inclusion to the scene of her vision, as she said:

> Thus I saw you wrapped in the pure white linen of innocence and bound by the golden bands of love, if I

[13]Ridder, 48-49.

> wish to be wrapped and bound in them with you, I was obliged above all to work wholeheartedly at purity of heart and works of loving charity" (*Leg*. II.16.5, 142).

This scene presented several allusions to salvation elsewhere in Gertrud's writings. Being clothed in the white linen with her Lord is a reminiscence of *Spiritual Exercise* I, recalling her baptism. As she meditated on being clothed in the "white robe," she said, "Ah, Jesus, sun of justice, make me clothe myself with you so that I may be able to live according to you[r will]. Make me, under your guidance preserve my robe of baptismal innocence white, holy and spotless, and present it undefiled before your tribunal, so that I may have it for eternal life. Amen." (Ex. I.165-169, 28).

Just as the Christ-child of her faith vision in the *Legatus* is clothed in innocence, so Gertrud has also been clothed in baptismal innocence, yet her salvation needed to be manifest in purity of heart and works of loving charity which, according to Cassian, is the goal of monastic life. In *Institute* IV.43, he wrote: "When virtue abounds purity of heart is acquired. With purity of heart the perfection of apostolic love is possessed."[14] Adalbert de Vogüé has commented on this link between purity of heart and charity in Cassian as follows:

> When he distinguished the final end and the intermediate goal, the *telos* of life eternal and the earthly *skopos* of purity of heart, Cassian shows that these two ends are intermingled. Their relationship one to the other is neither extrinsic or arbitrary. … The kingdom of God is already in us, since it is justice, peace and the joy of the Holy Spirit. Every soul in which these virtues are to be found are like angels, seen as heaven here on earth. Thus, the monastic soul,

[14]John Cassian, *The Institutes*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York and Ramsey, N.J.: The Newman Press, 2000) 102.

> striving toward perfect charity and unceasing prayer is, for the Church, the prefiguration of eternal joy.[15]

Thus Gertrud's linking of purity of heart with the works of loving charity manifested the long tradition of the monastic life, that of prefiguring in her life on earth the eternal union with the Lord, in whose salvation she has been enveloped through her baptism and renewed in her Christmas vision.

Gertrud's desire to be wrapped in the same garments as those of Christ echoed Bernard's *Homily* IV on the Incarnation, that is, his commentary on the phrase: "*Be it unto me according to thy word*":

> Be it unto me concerning the Word, according to thy word. May the Word, Which was in the beginning with God, be made Flesh of my flesh, according to thy word. May the Word be to me, I pray, not pronounced, so as to pass away, but conceived, so as to remain, clothed in flesh and not in air. May It be to me such as not only to be heard by my ears, but seen also by my eyes, touched by my hands, borne in my arms. Neither let It be to me a word written and voiceless, but Incarnate and Living; that is, not traced in mute figures upon dead parchments; but livingly stamped in human form in my chaste womb: and this not by the lines of a lifeless pen, but by the operation of the Holy Ghost.[16]

Clearly Gertrud picked up on the same spirituality as that of her predecessor: expressing the desire to be clothed in Christ,

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[15]Adalbert de Vogüé, "Monachism et Eglise dans la pensée de Cassien," in *Théologie de la vie monastique: Etudes sur la tradition patristique* (Paris: Aubier, 1961) 212-40, esp. 234-5. This paragraph was translated and cited by Benedict M. Guevin, "The Beginning and End of Purity of Heart: From Cassian to the Master and Benedict," in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature*, ed. Harriet A. Luckman and Linda Kulzer (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1999); see p. 210 for the quotation.

[16]Bernard of Clairvaux, *Four Homilies of St. Bernard, Abbot, upon the Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ commonly called Super Missis Est*, S. Luke 1.26-38 (Edinburgh: R. Grant & Son, 1843) 66. No translator of the text is listed in the volume.

that is, enfleshing the Word of God in such a way that all she does and is would manifest Christ's living incarnated presence through the power of the Holy Spirit acting in her.

In addition to being clothed in Christ's white garment of innocence, she saw herself drawn "by the golden bands of love." Here she cited Hosea 11:4, where God drew the child Ephraim, imaged as the young nation Israel, with the words: "I drew them with human cords, with bands of love." In the midst of the inclusion on the wrappings of innocence, Gertrud inserted the phrase: "for your embraces and kisses far surpass draughts of honey" (*Leg*. II.16.5, 142). This phrase echoed two verses found in the Song of Songs: "Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth (Song 1:2); and "Your lips drop honey" (Song 4:11).

The latter biblical verse forms part of the verse recited in the Rite of Consecration of Virgins as the virgin's head is crowned, which Gertrud recalled in *Exercise* III: "I have received honey and milk from his mouth and his blood has adorned my cheeks" (*Ex*. III.278, 52; cf. *Ex*. V.72, 75). Honey represented the "sweet words"[17] of scripture which nourished her relationship with her beloved. In *Exercise* V on nuptial union, she stated: "Ah! O charity, at the hour of death let your words better than wine refresh me and let your lips gentler than honey and the honeycomb console me" (*Ex*. V.162, 79).

The final section of *Legatus* II.16 began with a prayer: "Thanks be to you, who made the stars dressed the bright heavens and all the varied flowers of spring!" which mimicked "Creator of the stars of night," the words from the Advent hymn for the Divine Office. From this hymn verse Gertrud proceeded to reflect on another Candlemas feast, where Christ instructed her to dress the "little child" for the feast (*Leg*. II.16.6, 142). She "*was struggling to praise* [*extollere niterer*] the spotless innocence of [his] most pure human nature with such complete and faithful devotion that if [she] could … [she] would have freely made" the glory within her person "over … to [his] kindly innocence, so that [she] might make [him] yet more praiseworthy in [his] innocence" (*Leg*. II.16.6, 142; *Her*. II.16.2, 296). Such

[17] *Catholic Study Bible*, footnote to Song of Songs 4:11.

was her intention in prayer, when she "*saw* [*videbaris*] [him] dressed in white garments like a little child" (*Leg*. II.16.6, 142; *Her*. II.16.2, 296). She continued "*contemplat[ing]* [*pertractorem*] the depth of [his] humility" and "*saw* [*videbaris*] [him] wearing a green tunic," symbolic of the flowering of his grace, "always alive and vital," and never drie[d] up in the valley of humility" (*Leg*. II.16.6, 142-3; *Her*. II.16.6, 296).

Many of the images of this revelation echoed those of Gertrud's prayer in *Exercise* IV on her profession, that is, "on putting on the holy habit," where she prayed:

> O come, noble love, by which I, an ignoble reed, under your flower-like aspect, may be like a lily planted by the right hand of your most outstanding divinity in the deepest valley of holy humility, beside the water of your overflowing charity, beside the water of your great indulgence and loving-kindness. There I, dry stalk of your planting, who am within myself totally nothing and empty, may again become fully green through the fatness of your spirit and again flourish in you, O my most dulcet morning. Thus, in you, let me strip off my old self and its acts to be able to be clothed with a new self that has been created according to God, in justice and holiness of truth. (*Ex*. V.288-297, 68)

In both passages – *Legatus* II.16.6 and *Ex*. V – there was the valley of humility, the color green, clothing "with a new self" in the exercise, but Christ was clothed in "a green tunic" in the *Legatus*, whereas in *Ex*. V Gertrud desired to become "fully green," and there was a direct reference to flowers in the *Legatus*, but a "flower-like aspect" in the *Exercise*. While Christ was the true flower and fully clothed in the greenness of new life of the *Legatus*, Gertrud only hoped to become "fully green" through the grace of Christ's spirit within her in the *Exercise*.

The color white changed to green and then to purple, as her *recollection* [*recolarem*, *Her*. II.16.6, 298] continued on Christ's motive for her redemption. She saw him "wrapped round with a purple cloak to show that love is a truly regal garment, without which no one may enter the kingdom of heaven" (*Leg*. II.16.6, 143).

The purple robe of Christ's scourging from Mark 15:17 comes to mind as the obvious biblical allusion in Gertrud's reflection. However, there may well be a liturgical basis for the purple cloak on the feast of purification. In Durandus' *On the Sacred Vestments*, a thirteenth century work, the feast of purification was called *Hypapante*,[18] for which the normal liturgical color for vestments was white.

However, Durandus also noted the use of a violet vestment on this feast, in the following words: "But the Roman Church useth always violet … also in the Procession before Mass on the Feast of the Purification, because that Office bringeth to mind the anxious expectation of Symeon, and savoureth of the Old Testament."[19] It is quite possible then that Gertrud was layering the story of Christ's scourging with the overlay of the priest's purple vestment during the procession on Candlemas, which, in turn, served to symbolize her own clothing in Christ's suffering. One wonders if that purple vestment of the procession might have been exchanged for the white one at the Mass.

Gertrud closed her revelation on the Candlemas feast with a reflection on the Blessed Virgin, whose language alludes to a Candlemas sequence *Concentu parili hic te Maria:*

> While I *praised* [*commendarem*] as far as I could the same virtues in your glorious mother I saw her too dressed in the same way. And since this blessed Virgin, the rose that blossoms without a thorn, the while lily without spot, abounds – abounds to overflowing – with the flowers of every variety of virtue, *we pray* [*quaesumus*] that she may act as our eternal mediator, that through her our poverty may be transformed into riches. (*Leg*. II.16.6, 143; *Her*. II.16.6, 298)

[18]*Durandus on The Sacred Vestments: An English Rendering of the Third Book of the 'Rationale Divinorum Officiorum' of Durandus, bishop of Mende, A.D. 1287, with notes by the Rev. T. H. Passmore* (London: Thomas Baker, 1899) 142.

[19]*Ibid.*, 152.

The virtues Gertrud praised "in [Christ's] glorious mother," "the blessed Virgin" recalled "the virtues of a mother" [*matris virtutum*] of the sequence. This mother was "the white lily without spot," which hearkened back earlier in the *Legatus* to the "spotless mother" "with her spotless hands," who gave her son to Gertrud to hold (*Leg*. II.16.4, 141), an image also drawn from the sequence: "Spotless mother, you brought with you to the temple the one to be cleansed, God made flesh, who gave you the adornment of virginity."[20] This same virgin was imaged as "the rose that blooms without a thorn" from the sequence *Ave Maria*, who "abounds to overflowing – with the flowers of every variety of virtue" (*Leg*. II.16.6, 143). The motifs of flowers and virtue echoed yet another stanza of the *Concentu* sequence: "The arid root of Aaron (with) its lovely flower symbolized you, Mary, blossoming (with) child without the seed of a man."[21]

Mary, the Lord's "lily-like Mother" received Gertrud in her prayer of remembrance on the anniversary of consecration as a virgin (*Ex*. III.338, 55). In the same section of the *Exercise*, Mary is called "the imperial virgin rose" (*Ex*. III.342-43, 55) and "virginal rose" (*Ex*. III.349, 55), as Gertrud prayed to Jesus to be entrusted into Mary's maternal care: "Please, say to this virginal rose on my behalf: 'Receive her into your motherly care; I commend her to you in the total virtue of my divine charity. See to it, Mother, that you present her again spotless and re-entrust her to me reared after my own heart'. Amen." (*Ex*. III.349-52, 55).

What Gertrud "saw" and "praised" in her revelation at Candlemas is what she besought the Lord to become in her prayer of remembrance of her own consecration to virginity: to return to her God spotless and cared for in the virtuous love of this mother. It is no wonder that at the end of chapter sixteen, Gertrud prayed on behalf of others: "We pray that she [Mary] may act as our eternal mediator, that through her our poverty may be transformed into riches" (*Leg*. II.16.6, 143).

[20]Ridder, 59.
[21]*Ibid*.

Thus Gertrud, who prayed the liturgies for the Feast of Incarnation from Christmas until the Feast of Purification or the Presentation of Jesus, pondered the Word made flesh in these celebrations, not as some external ceremonies, but as intimate longings for the enfleshment of their reality in her own life. The colors, sights, sounds and prayers of the liturgies surrounded her with the visual and aural reality of Christ's presence within her, as she welcomed being clothed in the profound mystery of God being brought forth in her own life, not less that God was birthed in Mary. Partaking of the Eucharist on these feast days, carrying the candle in procession, breathing in the life of God's in-dwelling presence – all these actions of God's life-giving events wrap her in Christ's saving mystery of loving kindness and mercy.