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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I attempt to illustrate that there is common ground between Christianity and Islam in the area of spirituality. The procedure taken is one of describing the spiritual path from the perspectives of al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and St. Teresa of Ávila (d. 1582) in a comparative manner. The three-fold categorization of the spiritual path as consisting of the stages of purgation, illumination, and union, is used to provide the format for this comparison.

Chapter one deals with biographical material and historical contexts, noting similarities in their experiences, contexts, and contributions. Chapter two discusses the beginning stage of the spiritual path — purgation — dealing with the requirements of renunciation of the world and of one's self, repentance and the battle of the spirit with and victory over the flesh. The next stage — illumination — comprises chapter three. Here it is seen how the purgation of the self from all vice is a prerequisite to receiving divine manifestations to the soul. The roles of prayer, obedience, and the cultivation of virtues are discussed. Union, the final stage, is dealt with in chapter four. The meaning of union is discussed, including its various degrees, and how the mystic is consequently transformed.

The conclusion summarizes the findings of the previous chapters. It is seen that there is a great deal of commonality in the teachings of al-Ghazālī and St. Teresa; but differences also arise marking their spiritualities as being uniquely Muslim and Christian, respectively.
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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I shall put forward the hypothesis that there is a basis for a claim of affinity between Christianity and Islam in the area of spirituality. There are several reasons for the significance of such a claim. The two persons under study come from religions which have been at enmity throughout their common history. Furthermore, they come from different time periods (eleventh/sixteenth centuries), different nationalities (East — Persia; West — Spain), are of different sexes (male/female), and have different educational backgrounds (scholar/uneducated). The one thing which they have in common is that they both took up the spiritual life and became mystics. And so, considering such disparity, it is remarkable that their teachings have much in common.

Research led to a change in the title for this thesis from the original "A Comparison of Muslim and Christian Spirituality" to the present "The Spiritual Life from the Perspectives of Islam and Christianity". This illustrates a shift in focus which occurred, resulting from the discoveries made. The findings showed such a close affinity in the teachings of these two mystics on the spiritual path that for them to be simply compared one to another would be monotonous and somewhat pointless. However, to present a description of the spiritual path, solely relying upon Ghazālī and Teresa as the sources, yet doing so in a comparative fashion, can even more clearly illustrate their affinity. It is now necessary to discuss what is meant by "mysticism" and "spirituality".

It has been a thorn in the flesh for many scholars who have written on the
subject of mysticism to attempt to produce an adequate definition that would be all inclusive without falling into complete obscurity, and then only to have it severely criticized by others in subsequent works.

First of all, it needs to be recognized that "mysticism" is an interpretive category and is in fact a subcategory of interpretation of the yet higher category of "religious experience" (which is simply an experience interpreted in religious language). In other words, certain types of religious experience are interpreted as being mystical because they share in common some features of interpretation.¹ Those features that are shared in common seem to fall into certain subsets which has led to a delineation of different types of mysticism, for example, Zaehner's classification of nature, monistic, and theistic mysticism.² Robert S. Ellwood provides the most suitable definition of mysticism for our understanding of Ghazâlî and Teresa, who can be regarded as theistic mystics, in the following quote:

Mystical experience is experience in a religious context that is immediately or subsequently interpreted by the experiencer as encounter with ultimate divine reality in a direct non-rational way that engenders a deep sense of unity and of living during the experience on a level of being other than the ordinary.³

As theistic mystics, Ghazâlî's and Teresa's mysticism is characterized as being introversive, in that there is a withdrawal from the world, as being dualistic, in that there is an I-Thou relationship involved between the soul and God, and the

³Ellwood, p. 29.
experience of unity, so characteristic of mysticism, is described by the imagery of mutual love.¹

It is this mystical "union with God" which is the goal, for both Ghazâlî and Teresa, of the spiritual path. Hence, spirituality embodies the teaching and practice of how one can attain this goal. Ellwood illustrates this relationship, stating that mysticism can be expressed as

...a generalized account of the spiritual path, in which the experiencer progressively presents its realities as the narrative tries to show others how to encounter the same transcendence. Closely related are the rules of monastic or devotional fellowships. These rules express the spiritual experiences most important to their traditions. They do so through a stated way of life that assumes the supreme importance of mystical states.²

Thus mysticism is related to spirituality in that mystical union is the goal of the spiritual path.

Spirituality is a more comprehensive category, including not only mystical experience, but also religious experience in general, and the principles involved in attaining them. Louis Bouyer provides an excellent definition of spirituality:

Christian spirituality (or any other spirituality) is distinguished from dogma by the fact that, instead of studying or describing the objects of belief as it were in the abstract, it studies the reactions which these objects arouse in the religious consciousness.³

²Ellwood, pp. 99-100.
This is to say that spirituality is just as much a "science" as dogmatic theology in that it comprises "a methodically organized body of knowledge"\(^1\) but the object of study is the subjective pole, man's relation to and experience of God, on the axis of religion, instead of the objective pole, God in his revelation to man, which is the study of dogmatic theology. In other words, spirituality "studies the conduct of the soul vis-a-vis the data of revelation",\(^2\) it is the "science of the reactions of the religious consciousness vis-a-vis the object of faith".\(^3\) This leads us to a discussion of the approach, method, format and sources used in this thesis.

The approach taken is to simply describe the spiritual path according to the teachings of Ghazālī and Teresa. There will be no attempt at trying to get to the "common core of mystical experience", to test some theory of religion, to illustrate the superiority of a religion, or to account for the affinity found here. It is hoped that Ghazālī's and Teresa's teachings are presented objectively, without any misrepresentation, and without undue interpretation.

To achieve this, I shall employ the methodology described as the "Comparative". Stanley A. Cooke defines the "Comparative Method" as an "unbiased co-ordination of all comparable data irrespective of context or age".\(^4\)


\(^{2}\) Idem.

\(^{3}\) Ibid., p. 52.

The format or structure of this paper will be based upon (after a brief introduction to the two mystics under study) the classical definition of the spiritual path as comprising the three stages of purgation, illumination, and union. This three-fold classification schema originated with Pseudo Dionysius, a fifth century Syrian monk. It initially was exclusively a Christian definition but has become universalized and is quite regularly employed in the classification of spirituality in general.

To adopt one of the writers’ own classifications for providing a format, such as Teresa’s seven mansions, would make the comparison a great deal more difficult. For such a formalization would become an obstacle since Ghazālī does not use a format close to that. What is being compared here are concepts and not particular formalization of those concepts. There is enough common ground between the two mystics to allow one to extract from both of their particular structuralizations the concepts they commonly share and which fall into the three categories being adopted without their being violated or misrepresented in the process. It is not my intention to turn the purgation-illumination-union schema into an absolute. The use of categories is simply a helpful tool in bringing into order material drawn from disparate sources.

In using this three-fold classification, the reader should be aware that various aspects of the spiritual path do not belong exclusively to one stage (e.g., prayer). It should not be thought that the path simply comprises three separate stages which do not overlap and includes a guarantee that one will progress from point C to D without regressing to B or jumping ahead to E. The spiritual path is
an interwoven complex entity with room for surprise and novelty, with each individual's path being unique to that particular individual. Ghazālī and Teresa recognized this and so must we.

The sources used for this study are exclusively literary and predominantly primary. It appears that no previous work has been done which compares the spiritual teachings of Ghazālī and Teresa. This limits the value of secondary sources to one of enhancing one's understanding of the individual writers and their historical contexts. Further limitations occur in that little has been written on Ghazālī's mystical teachings. Scholarship has thus far focused mostly on his theological and philosophical contributions. More has been written on Teresa in this regard but a setback exists in the fact that many of these works remain untranslated (most being in Spanish). However, all of Teresa's writings have been translated and many of Ghazālī's as well. The result is that their own writings provide the bulk of the information used in this thesis. These writings will be briefly discussed in the next chapter.

As this work involves a comparison of spirituality from two different religious traditions, two pitfalls must be avoided. First of all, one can fall prone to attempting to illustrate similarities through a process of eliminating all differences, that is, by ignoring everything that is peculiar to the one tradition. (For example, to discuss Christian spirituality while removing everything that is specifically Christian about it).¹ Such poor scholarship merely distorts the facts in order to have them accommodate an a priori theory of spirituality. Secondly, one

¹ Bouyer, p. viii.
must avoid the

...pseudo-scientific...prejudice that the understanding of the objects polarizing the religious consciousness is essentially foreign to an understanding of this consciousness itself. On the contrary, spirituality studies this consciousness only in its living relationship with these objects.... Dogmatic theology, therefore, must always be presupposed as the basis of spiritual theology, even though the latter concerns itself with the data of the former only under the relationship that they entertain with the religious consciousness.¹

Such an approach would violate both Ghazālī's and Teresa's teachings on this point. They strongly maintain that spirituality is built upon the edifice of religious orthodoxy, that it cannot be separated at all from orthodoxy or orthopraxy. It would be unthinkable for them that one could attain the goal of mystical union without being an orthodox Muslim or Christian respectively. The goal of the believer is to gain an afterlife in Paradise where one will fully enjoy communion with God. The spiritual path includes the path of the ordinary believer. The difference between the two is that the Beatific Vision is believed, by the mystic, to be possible to be experienced here and now, that the communion with God hoped for in Heaven can be tasted in this life. It is interesting to note that the error of separating the spiritual life from orthodoxy, or trying to understand mystical experience apart from its religious context, was prevalent in their times and something they both had counteracted. It will be seen that both brought reform and revitalization of orthodoxy by attempting to bridge the split between mysticism and orthodoxy, which had occurred in both Islam and Christianity. This touches upon the subject matter of the following chapter.

¹ Idem.
Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī was born in the year 1058 C.E. at Ṭabarān, in N.E. Persia, a township of Ṭūs which, now in ruins, lies near modern Meshed. He pursued his studies primarily at Ṭūs, with an interlude at Jurjān, and then continued at Nīshāpūr in 1077, to study under the most distinguished Ashʿarite theologian of the time, al-Juwaynī. His studies followed the standard Islamic curriculum for higher education, which means it included the study of the Qurʾān, Ḥadīth and its commentaries, Arabic grammar, Islamic jurisprudence, the biography of the transmitters of the Ḥadīth, et cetera.

He had early contacts with Sufism. His father died when he was young, leaving him and his brother under the care of a Sufi friend of the family. At Ṭūs he possibly studied Sufism under Yūsuf al-Nassāj, and at Nīshāpūr, he became a disciple of al-Farmadhī (d. 1084), who had been a pupil of both al-Qushayrī and Ghazālī’s uncle. Furthermore, his teacher al-Juwaynī, had been a pupil of the renowned Sufi, Abū Nu‘ām al-Īṣfahānī (d. 1038).

He remained at Nīshāpūr studying until the death of al-Juwaynī in 1085. He then joined the court of the great Vizier of the Seljuks, Niẓām al-Mulk. His profound knowledge of Islamic theology, law, and philosophy, so impressed the Vizier that he appointed him to the Chair of Theology at the college in Baghdad in 1091. This was a most coveted position, and it was exceptional that Ghazālī was yet so young (34 years old). He was very successful as a professor and attained to the glory and prestige of being among the intellectual elite, but he
entered upon a spiritual crisis in July, 1095, which changed his life and was to have its impact on all of Islam.

He writes in his semi-autobiographical work, Deliverance from Error, that his previous studies had convinced him that the happiness of the world to come could be attained only by a God-fearing life, where one was not attached to this world and fleshly desires, but rather, earnestly sought and loved God. He saw how entangled his life was with this world, how much pride he had, how he revelled in the glory of his prestige, and that he would be doomed to hell: "I saw for certain that I was on the brink of a crumbling bank of sand in imminent danger of hell-fire unless I set about to mend my ways."  

He "reflected on this continuously for a time.... One day I would form the resolution to quit Baghdad and get rid of these adverse circumstances; the next day I would abandon my resolution. I put one foot forward and drew the other back."  

This battle continued for sixth months, where he "was tossed about between the attractions of worldly desires and the impulses towards eternal life". Then his health became afflicted: "God caused my tongue to dry up so that I was prevented from lecturing...and at the same time my power to digest and assimilate food and drink was impaired.... My powers became so weakened that the doctors gave up all hope of successful treatment." This crisis forced him to seek "refuge with God most high as one who is driven to Him, because

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 57.
4 Ibid.
he is without further resources of his own."¹ God then "made it easy for my heart to turn away from position and wealth, from children and friends."²

In November, 1095, he left everything behind, sold all he had, left provisions for his family, and went to Damascus. There, in solitude, he practised devotional exercises for almost two years, after which he went to Jerusalem, Mecca, and Medina. It was during this time when the first crusade set out from the West, capturing Jerusalem in 1098.

His concerns for, and appeals from, his family drew him back home, where he continued his religious exercises. In Ṭūs, he established a type of hostel, where disciples could live, to share his life, and receive his teaching. During these years, he became a full-fledged Sufi, and became convinced of the need for Sufism by orthodox Islam.

The Vizier Fakhr al-Mulk (son of Niẓām) prevailed upon Ghazālī to accept a post at the college in Nishāpūr. He accepted, and taught yet another three years, from 1106 to 1109, when he retired to Ṭūs. He died of failing health on December 8, 1111.

It is not clear exactly how many works can be definitely attributed to Ghazālī. Since the time of Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240), there have been allegations that books have been erroneously attributed to him, and quite a high number of unauthentic works seem to exist.

¹ Ibid., p. 58.
² Idem.
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His works range from a type of autobiography, *Deliverance from Error*, written one to two years before his death, to legal, philosophical and logical, dogmatic-theological-polemical, to sufistic works. Besides the *Deliverance*, the works of concern to this study include his greatest, *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, a four volume work written during the ten years when he fully practiced Sufism; *The Alchemy of Happiness*, a Persian abridgement of the *Revival* for popular use; *The Beginning of Guidance*, which can be seen as an introduction to the *Revival*, preparing the reader for this larger work; and, *The Niche for Lights*, written near the end of his life presenting his more esoteric views.

The Islamic Empire of the Abbasid Caliphate was beginning to undergo disintegration. Coming into power in 750 C.E., Islam saw its greatest expansion, however, this soon proved to be too vast to be maintained under one ruler. The Caliph lost one province after another to their ruling governors and succeeding sons. Thus local dynasties arose which were practically autonomous, with the Caliph being given only a formal acknowledgement of his supremacy. This continued, and by the end of the tenth century, "the authority of the Caliphs had shrunk so much that it hardly extended beyond the precincts of Baghdad."\(^1\) The Baghdad Caliphate came under the control of the Buwayhid family of Shi'tes in 945 C.E., to be released from their control by the Sunnī Seljuk dynasty in 1055.

Under the Seljuks, the Muslim Empire once again became united and prospered. M. Umaruddin states that, "The era of unity and peace ushered in by the

Seljuqs may fitly be called the golden age of Islam. Education became universal. The cities of Asia were adorned with mosques, colleges, universities, hospitals and other charitable institutions. It was a time of great cultural achievements as well. It was under the rule of the Seljuks that Ghazâlî lived, teaching in some of the colleges established at this time.

A rift between Sufism and mainstream Islam began to appear quite early in Sufism's history. Many Sufi's began to abandon the orthodox practices of Islam, believing themselves to have been liberated from observing Islamic Law after having attained union with God. The orthodox, on the other hand, suspected Sufi doctrine of heresy and lamented over their lack of religious observances. However, on the other hand, orthodox Islam had become merely an external affair of religious practice, lacking devotion and sincere piety.

Ghazâlî's most important contribution to Islam was to fully integrate Sufism into orthodox Islam. In short, he made mysticism orthodox and orthodoxy mystical. The achievement of his work was to lay the foundation of Sufism upon the observance of outward acts of piety as prescribed by the orthodox, and at the same time, to make the inward piety of Sufism the consummation of, not an alternative to, the formal Islamic observances. No longer was Sufism isolated from mainstream Islam, it now became established as "a standard element in the Muslim believer's life" due to Ghazâlî.

Fazlur Rahman states that,

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1 Ibid., p. 17.
The influence of al-Ghazâlî in Islam is incalculable. He not only reconstituted orthodox Islam, making Sufism an integral part of it, but also was a great reformer of Sufism, purifying it of un-Islamic elements and putting it at the service of orthodox religion.¹

Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada, was born in Ávila, Spain, on March 28, 1515, into a large and prosperous family. Her mother died when she was thirteen, and she was taken to an Augustinian convent to be educated. She had at that time the greatest aversion to becoming a nun. What caused a turning point in her life was that she became seriously ill and had to return home. On the way there, she stayed for a few days at her widowed uncle's home, who had became a friar. While there, she heard him talk a great deal about God and the vanities of this world. He made a deep impression upon her and she writes,

I began to fear that, if I had died of my illness, I should have gone to hell; and though, even then, I could not incline my will to being a nun, I saw that this was the best and safest state, and so, little by little, I determined to force myself to embrace it.... I used to convince myself by using the following argument. The trials and distresses of being a nun could not be greater than those of purgatory and I had fully deserved to be in hell.... This decision, then, to enter the religious life seems to have been inspired by servile fear more than by love.²

It seems that it was in November, 1536, at age 20, when Teresa took up the religious life. Upon entering the convent she was blessed with a great joy, which, "amazed me, for I could not understand whence it arose." However, this joy was not sufficient to cure her and the change in her life and diet worsened

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her already poor health. Various treatments proved unprofitable, and her condition worsened, reaching the point where she was thought to be dead. One night she had a prolonged fit (probably cataleptic), which left her unconscious for nearly four days. Believed to be dead, a grave was dug for her, wax put on her eyelids, and in a monastery, rites for the dead were performed on her behalf. She returned to consciousness, shown through tears, but was in a terrible state:

All my bones seemed to be out of joint and there was a terrible confusion in my head.... I was all doubled up, like a ball, and no more able to move...than if I had been dead.... I could move, I think, only one finger of my right hand. ¹

This paralysis lasted until Easter Sunday — eight months. Then she slowly began to improve over the next three years, although remaining crippled to some degree until her fortieth year. She never gained complete health. For all of her life she was plagued with pains, especially in the heart, morning sickness, fevers, and headaches.

The next twenty years were a continual spiritual struggle — a conflict between God and the world in her life. She describes this as follows:

I can testify that this is one of the most grievous kinds of life which I think can be imagined, for I had neither any joy in God nor any pleasure in the world. When I was in the midst of worldly pleasures, I was distressed by the remembrance of what I owed to God; when I was with God, I grew restless because of worldly affections. ²

She finally came upon a turning point in her life when she saw "an image

¹ Ibid., p. 32.
² Ibid., p. 48.
which had been procured for a certain festival", that of "Christ sorely wounded". It so deeply moved her to become totally devoted to God that this experience came to be regarded as her second conversion. From then onwards, her spiritual devotion to God improved, and she began to spend long periods of prayer, and earnestly sought to live a sinless life. A love for God began to grow in her heart and she began to receive "many favours from God".

A result of the supernatural experiences which she began to experience was persecution from her fellow nuns and her spiritual advisors. She was held suspect of being deceived by the devil. This caused her great distress for about two years until her advisors and confessors were convinced otherwise. However, one trial ended for only another one to begin.

One day she and some sisters discussed the need for establishing a new convent and becoming Discalced nuns, adhering rigorously to the Rule of their Order. She later received the command to establish such a convent from God through a vision. The whole idea caused her deep distress because, "...I had a fairly good idea of the serious disturbances and trials which the work would cost me...." And so it did. However, this was the beginning of the reform movement led by Teresa of the Carmelite Order, which was to prove successful. By the end of her life she would have established seventeen new convents throughout Spain. She passed away on her journey home from establishing the last convent at Burgos on October 4, 1582.

1 Ibid., p. 54.
2 Ibid., p. 220.
3 Bouyer, p. 532.
Teresa wrote exclusively on the spiritual life, besides autobiographical works. She completed her main autobiographical work, *The Book of Her Life*, in 1565 (the second edition which had been revised under order). It is an account of the exterior events in her life but subsumed under an account of her interior life, with detailed descriptions of her experiences of God and spiritual growth. It reads like a diary, not like a theological treatise. The next important work relied upon for this thesis, is her *Way of Perfection*, which was begun immediately after her *Life*. As the title suggests, it is more didactic in character, her purpose being to teach her nuns of the way of prayer, and how one can attain Christian Perfection. It grew out of the requests of her nuns for such a work, and she received permission from her superiors to write it. Lastly, the work of greatest importance and influence, is *The Interior Castle*. This work was written over a period of a few months in 1577, and represents Teresa’s most mature thought regarding the spiritual path, being written in her sixties. It describes the stages of the spiritual path through the use of the imagery of the soul as an interior castle with many dwelling places that one passes through before one reaches God in the centre. She attempts to be didactic, without being autobiographical, but it is obvious throughout that she is relying upon her own experiences for her teaching.

Spain in the sixteenth century likewise was in its "Golden Age". It was a time of political and material prosperity — Spain having been taken back from the Moors and united under one rule through the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella brought political stability and strength, and the discovery of the New World provided vast riches. It also was a time of a prosperous intellectual life, where
Spain could rival France and Italy for the number of prestigious masters in her universities. However, spiritually, although Spain could boast of leading in the Counter Reformation, and having the "brightest stars in European spirituality" (besides Teresa, Sts. Ignatius of Loyola and John of the Cross), it was a time of intolerance and persecution through the establishment of the Inquisition in 1478.

Religious unity was seen as being a tool for providing political unity. "The supreme problem for any ruler of Spain was the unification of these many states and the harmonizing of their conflicting interests."\(^1\) To resolve this problem, the Church played a crucial role. The past intermingling of different races and religions — Jew, Christian, Muslim — and the state of the division that Spain had existed in, led to the establishment of the Inquisition, which seemed to be the most feasible solution.\(^2\)

Furthermore, the threat of Lutheranism made the Inquisition even more zealous and cautious to uncover anything approaching heresy, and so orthodoxy was even more rigorously defined. The Inquisition turned its attention to stopping the Illuminist movement.

The Illuminist movement "produced excellent as well as distorted forms of spirituality".\(^3\) In Spain, this movement developed into two streams — one

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attaching the "highest importance to recollection", and the other to "the idea of self-abandonment". ¹ Those of the former group comprised many among the religious orders who sought to teach the way of recollection as a means of attaining union with God. They came to be known as the "spiritual men" or "men of experience", referred to by Teresa. Osuna, a Franciscan friar, gave "the movement its definitive expression in his Third Spiritual Alphabet" which greatly influenced Teresa.²

Besides being an illuminist of the conservative, orthodox type, Teresa was also a part of the Counter Reformation. "As the Protestant challenge to Rome grew in strength and effectiveness, the need for reform came everywhere to be accepted as urgent."³ The Primate of Spain sought to initiate a movement to reform among the clergy. The spiritual fervour that lay behind the Illuminists and Erasmianists, although formally suppressed, still existed and "forced its way irresistibly into new channels, and welled up afresh in the spiritual revival of the 1560s and 1570s."⁴ A wave of mysticism swept through the religious orders. Since it was believed that the monasteries were under control, the Inquisition, for the most part, tolerated it. This sense for an urgent need for reform and a greater spiritual devotion led Teresa to start a reform of her Carmelite order.

In the larger context of European Spirituality, the sixteenth century saw the consolidation of a transition which began in the Middle Ages: a resolution of the breach between mysticism and theology. At the end of the fourteenth century,

¹ Idem.
² Idem.
³ Elliott, p. 236.
⁴ Ibid., p. 237.
the religious had become weary of speculative mysticism, nominalism, and the concept of the spiritual life as being reserved for the elite. This reaction against speculation, and even against monasticism, expressed itself concretely in a movement known as the **devotia moderna**. The spiritual crisis of this breach became resolved through the emerging belief that "the spiritual life became a fact of experience, valid as such — no longer the experience of a fact valid in itself."¹ From this time onwards, "mystical experience was thought of not so much in terms of an experience of the data of Revelation in themselves, as of an experience in the framework of, and guaranteed by, these data."²

This can be seen in the writings of Teresa, where one can see the influence of the **devotia moderna** upon her through Francisco de Osuna (d. 1540), and Bernardino de Laredo (d. 1540).

In adopting their psychological orientation, Teresa was indirectly influenced by the conception of contemplation that was simple and affective and devoid of any intellectual claims.... While she recognized the importance of dogma, St. Teresa's aim was to describe what she felt.³

The characteristics that sixteenth century Spanish Spirituality derived from the **devotia moderna** are described by Louis Bouyer as follows:

...there was the primacy of the psychological aspect — of the subjective side of the interior life, even of the contemplative life. More attention is paid to mental and emotional reactions than to the object, or rather the objective content of contemplation. Prayer, by a shift that is only natural when it is seen from this new angle, becomes in

¹ Bouyer, p. 543.
² Ibid., p. 538.
³ Idem.
This explains the reason why Teresa’s writings are for the most part very subjective. The bulk of it is a description of her experience of the spiritual path she trod, rather than a systematized theological treatise on mystical theology.

Considering her context, her writings could be seen as partly being a testimony to the reality of supernatural experiences of God, including their validation by orthodox doctrine. She sought to keep herself clear from any illuminist heresy, pointing out where others have gone astray, yet at the same time, trying to retain what was of legitimate value in the illuminist movement. And so, in this sense, it can be said that through her writings — which became very influential — she contributed a great deal to bridging the gap between mysticism and theology, by teaching that orthodox dogma was the foundation for the spiritual life and guarded one from going astray into some kind of pseudo-spirituality.

On a personal level, Teresa and Ghazâlî although believers came to realize that their hearts were entangled with the world, overruling any devotion to God. This realization brought them to a spiritual crisis which affected their health. The fear of being condemned to hell persuaded them to embrace a religious life in order to become truly devoted and obedient to God. Their initial motivation was fear, but that in time changed into love. In having earnestly taken up the spiritual path both reached the summit of mystical union with God.

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1 Ibid., p. 541.
2 Kavanaugh, p. 21.
On a broader level, it was their personal experiences which led them to attempt to bring a revitalization of their respective religions. Both had to deal with heretical streams of mysticism present in their times which had led to the suspect of any mysticism by the orthodox. This fact shaped their teachings on spirituality. They both sought to defend authentic mysticism by pointing out the fallacies of certain extremists while at the same time established the spiritual path upon a foundation of orthodox religious practice. By reintegrating mysticism with orthodox practices and beliefs they revitalized orthodoxy as well as guarded mysticism from degenerating into a pseudo-spirituality.

Ghazālī as a scholar and leading intellectual of his time, wrote his seminal work, the Revival, with the explicit purpose of presenting in a systematized fashion an integration of mysticism and orthodoxy. He presents the "five pillars" of Islamic practice in a manner which retains their importance as being fundamental to orthodox Islam while also being the foundation and means of the way of a Sufi. Through them one treads the spiritual path.

Teresa, on the other hand, was not a scholar or leading intellectual of her time, but simply a nun who most likely could not even read the Scriptures in Latin. Unlike Ghazālī, she did not purpose to deal with the intellectual, spiritual issues of her time on a large scale. Her perspective was more immediately concerned with her religious order. Because of her circumstances, she was forced to remain cautiously within orthodoxy while (because of the summits she had reached spiritually) she attempted to teach her nuns, through sharing her experience, how they too might attain union with God. This resulted in her teachings being an
integration of mysticism and dogma as well. Both were to be widely read in the centuries to come, and consequently, left a profound impression upon their respective religions.
II. CHAPTER TWO: THE STAGE OF PURGATION

Before beginning a description of the spiritual path a discussion of who can embark on the journey and how important divine assistance is in the process is required.

Ghazālī provides and defines a spiritual path for different types of people. For some (the multitude), the goal is simply to enter Paradise and enjoy the happiness it will bring. For them the path consists of obedience to, and fulfillment of, the demands of Islamic Law which could be called the "Way of Purgation" — a riddance of vices and the living of a virtuous life. The few, on the other hand, are what one would regard as the mystics. They are those who attain to gnosis — the "Way of Illumination", and from there on to union. They testify to the dogma of God's Unity, not merely by the intellect, but through experiential intuition, gnosis. They not only follow the demands of the Law, but also go beyond external observance to cultivate the mystical virtues.¹

Likewise for Teresa, "...God does not lead all by one path.... Prepare yourself so that God may lead you along the path if he so desires. When he does not, you can practice humility......"² Not everyone is called to be a contemplative, however, neither is anyone excluded if they so desire. Teresa explains this as follows:

...I said that the Lord had different paths by which to go to Him just as there are many dwelling places.... Since His Majesty has

understood our weakness, He has provided after the manner of who He is. But He did not say: "some come by this path, and others by another". Rather, His mercy was so great He excluded no one from striving to come to this fount of life to drink. ...He calls us publicly, crying aloud. But since He is so good, He does not force us....

Hence, it is believed that there are many ways a believer can walk. He has the choice to either take up the spiritual life and seek union with God, or to live the life of an ordinary believer, satisfied with the union he will enjoy in the world to come. Both are paths acceptable to, and provided by, God.

Although the spiritual life is open to all, progress can not be made without the grace of God. It is maintained that man is unable to acquire any virtue without divine assistance. For Ghazâlî, man needs to be guided throughout his spiritual quest by the gift of God (tawfîq), which is manifested in four ways: 1) as guidance from God, the ability to distinguish between good and evil; 2) as direction, the "will" to do what is right; 3) as setting aright, the power from God which makes the body obey the will; and 4) as confirmation, God makes "circumstances congenial for the actualization of the will." 2

For Teresa, the concept of grace is so taken for granted that she does not bother to expound upon it. Instead, she refers to it in passing. For example, in her describing the prayer of active recollection as not being supernatural, she states that it is "...something we can desire and achieve ourselves with the help of God — for without this help we can do nothing, not even have a good

1 Ibid., p. 114.
thought.¹ When we do something good, we should give heed to the source and understand that God alone is the source of any good.²

Their teachings regarding the beginning stages of the spiritual path are very similar. Both agree that they essentially involve a purgative process. This includes repentance from sin, renunciation of the world, and embarking upon the battle over one's flesh, to put the carnal self to death and be alive only to God.

Ghazālī teaches that man's overall purpose in life is to undergo a spiritual alchemy. The knowledge of which has been made available, through the teaching of the prophets — sent by God — with the purpose of turning mankind away from the world and towards Himself. In The Alchemy of Happiness, he explains that life's context is a spiritual battle of turning away from the world towards God. One should see this world as a "market-place passed by pilgrims on their way to the next" world. One goes to the market-place to purchase something and then returns home. Likewise, the true purpose of this world is that it is here where man can acquire,

...by the use of his bodily senses, some knowledge of the works of God, and, through them, of God Himself.... It is for the acquirement of this knowledge that the spirit of man has descended into this world of water and clay.³

¹ Way, p. 147.  
² Ibid., p. 290.  
Chapter Two: The Stage of Purgation / 19

Ghazālī discusses renunciation of the world in conjunction with the mystical virtue of poverty in *The Revival of Religious Sciences*. They strike at the same issue — to uproot a love for anything but God. Renunciation involves both a turning away from one object so as to attach oneself to another. For Ghazālī, "He who renounces things other than God, even the highest Paradise and does not love things other than God is *jahid*, or one who renunciates the world."\(^1\) One has to realize that he has an opportunity to exchange something of a lesser value for something greater, and that he can only gain by making this exchange and can only lose if he does not. To exchange the world for God and this life for the next is like exchanging ice for a jewel. Ice, like this world, is short-lived and will pass away; but a jewel, like the next world, is permanent and everlasting. Knowledge is of importance here, "...there should be a knowledge of this world and the next world. The greater this knowledge, the greater the strength. He whose belief is sure and firm will sell this world lieu of the next world...."\(^2\) The motive for making such an exchange can be to save oneself from Hell, or, yet a higher motive, to gain rewards in Paradise, or, the highest motive, to meet God face to face and be in his presence and receive his pleasure.\(^3\) Ideally, one should have the latter motive.

Teresa would agree wholeheartedly in regards to the need for renouncing the world — detaching oneself from it so as to be totally devoted to God. In her imagery of the spiritual life involving a progression of the soul through several

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\(^2\) Ibid., p. 201.

\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 212-213.
rooms of a castle, "in whose centre dwells His Majesty", she asserts that many people, believers, will not enter the first dwelling place because of apathy, ignorance, disbelief, or most commonly, because of too great an involvement in the world.

For Teresa, "the door of entry to this castle is prayer and reflection."¹ In *The Way of Perfection* she describes the necessary foundations for a life of prayer.² Certain virtues are a prerequisite, and if great effort is not taken to attain them, God will not unite himself with the soul. These virtues are humility, detachment from the world and the self, which then allows for the virtue of loving God and one's neighbor. One is to practice going against his own will in order to do God's. She teaches that unless one totally gives up his will and surrenders to do God's one will never attain to contemplation so as to "drink living water". And so one begins with the aim of careful obedience to God's will. Since the spiritual walk will be very difficult and trying, one must realize that one needs great determination to persevere and courage to always continue and not to turn back.

To progress from this first dwelling place, one must overcome one's love for the world and make a definite decision to chose God instead. A complete turn-around, from the world towards God is necessary. Teresa teaches that a knowledge of God and of oneself is helpful in bringing this about. If one could see the holiness of God, one would then see one's own wretchedness before him — resulting in humility and a fear of offending God. Seeing the need to love and

¹ *Interior Castle*, p. 286.
² *op. cit.*, pp. 28-77.
obey him, one would renounce the world and turn towards God in repentance.

One can see from this that hand in hand with renunciation, in fact preceding it, is repentance. In the Revival, Ghazālī states that the first step on embarking upon the spiritual path is repentance, which is based upon faith – the conviction that there is no god but God. As faith grows, sin is exposed and seen to be destructive to the soul resulting in godly fear and contrition. The repentant has come to see that he is in fact separated from the Beloved by his heart being veiled. The grief over this stirs up the desire for amending one’s life, to turn around and cut off all love for the world and be attached only to God. Ghazālī defines repentance as follows:

\[ \text{tawba\text{h} means repentance for a sin by taking promise not to do the same evil again and to return to God. Repentance is the beginning in the life of a person who intends to walk in the path of religion. In other words, to control the passions and low desires of the self, to return from the paths of the devil and to walk in the path of God.}\]"\(^1\)

For Ghazālī, "Nothing can give salvation to a man except the fire of repentance."\(^2\) The reason lies in repentance being the means of expiating sin. As a Muslim, he believed that every soul is born pure and clean but gets polluted in life by the sins that are committed. When one sins, smoke rises in the heart, and once several layers of smoke have accumulated they make the mirror of the heart rusty. If this continues, and the rust remains too long, it will turn into iron and destroy the mirror. One therefore has to deal with not only present

\(^1\) Revival, p. 12.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 1.
and future sin but also past sin and restore and maintain the soul in purity.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 12, 16.} These impurities are burnt off "by the fire of repentance and the light of good deeds can remove the darkness of dirt gathered on the soul."\footnote{Ibid., p. 16.} And so repentance and good deeds expiates all sin, leaving one as though he had never sinned. In sum for Ghazālī, man is initially pure and free from sin but becomes corrupted in the process of life. This corruption can be reversed, restoring one's original state of purity. For Teresa as a Christian, however, it is believed otherwise.

She assumes that her readers are well aware of Roman Catholic dogma which maintains that a person is born naturally into a fallen state of mortal sin with a corrupted nature. Man is therefore unable to enter into communion with God until — through the Church's sacraments, beginning with Baptism — he has entered a state of sanctifying grace made effective through Christ. She therefore simply presupposes that her readers have repented to the degree such that they have entered the kingdom of God, and are members of the Body of Christ, the Church, and hence are partakers of a new divine nature. And so she begins with the person who already is a member of the Church but is in love with the world and the self.

To come to a state of repentance and to choose God over the world and one's self, one then has taken the first giant step into the battlefield where the flesh will be at war with the spirit. With this resolve, the seeker now,
...enters upon the contest between the impulse to what is spiritual and the impulse to what is sensual, and the battlefield is the human heart. He needs the patience which will enable him to stand fast by what is spiritual, in the face of what is sensual....

A most important aspect of the purgation process is this battle between the spirit and the flesh, or between the desires of the self and those of God. In essence all vices arise from attachment to and love of self, and all virtues from attachment to and love of God. It follows, then, that vices are to be eradicated and virtues cultivated. This involves the practice of asceticism for the purpose of bringing the passions under control and subordinate to the spirit. All that which is material and sensual is to be renounced and forsaken for the sake of what is divine.

In the Way, Teresa follows her discussion of the virtues of love, detachment, and humility, with one on mortification. Some of us, she writes, are "such lovers of comfort", and "so fond of our health", that the

....first thing we must strive for is to rid ourselves of our love of our bodies.... A fault this body has is that the more comfort we try to give it the more needs it discovers.... And...when we begin to conquer these wretched little bodies, we will not be so troubled by them.

Besides practicing exterior mortification, it is most necessary to likewise practice interior mortification. It is acquired "...by proceeding gradually, not giving in to our own will and appetites, even in little things, until the body is completely

2 op. cit., pp. 77, 80-81.
surrendered to the spirit."\(^1\) The whole matter,

...lies in losing concern about ourselves and our own satisfaction.... So, let us try hard to go against our own will in everything. For if you are careful, as I said, you will gradually, without knowing how, find yourselves at the summit."\(^2\)

Paralleling this two-fold aspect of asceticism of exterior and interior mortification, Teresa also asserts that one must first avoid all mortal sin and then go on to avoid all venial sin, seeking to succumb to no occasion of sin whatsoever. This purgation of all sin in one's life is followed by a cultivation of virtues which she stresses time and again. As practicing vices is equivalent to sinful disobedience, so cultivating virtues is willful obedience to God. Teresa stresses the importance of gaining virtue by saying, "...that the King of Glory will not come to our soul — I mean to be united with it — if we do not make effort to gain the great virtues."\(^3\) Likewise, she stresses the importance of obedience in saying, "I can assure her [the nun] that as long as she fails in obedience she will never attain to being a contemplative....."\(^4\)

Ghazâlî more explicitly describes this battle of purgation of the spirit. In the *Alchemy*, he teaches that man has a dual nature — an outward shape, the body, which is base and earthly, and an inward entity, a soul or spirit, which is lofty and divine. It is the soul which is man's true essence, and belongs to the invisible world, having come into this world as a traveller visiting a foreign

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 82.  
\(^2\) *Idem*.  
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 95.  
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 105.
land, but will return to its homeland. Spiritual alchemy involves a purging of the carnal passions. This purgation frees the soul to rule, so that one is endowed with angelic qualities, being attached to God instead of the world.

Furthermore, Ghazâlî describes mortification in terms of inward and outward piety. He provides some basic guidelines in his work, The Beginning of Guidance, where — in his introductory remarks — he teaches the following:

...you must realize that the guidance which is the fruit of knowledge has a beginning and an ending, an outward aspect and an inward. No one can reach the ending until he has completed the beginning; no one can discover the inward aspect until he has mastered the outward.... Know that the beginning of guidance is outward piety and the end of guidance is inward piety.... Piety designates carrying out the commands of God most high and turning aside from what he prohibits, and thus has two parts.¹

In other words, one has to keep the formal observance of Islamic law, which demonstrates outward piety and is the place to begin — doing what is commanded to be done, and refraining from doing what is prohibited. Once this is mastered, one can continue on to the inward aspect of piety, as found in Sufism. The rest of this work explains in part how to live out this outward piety, describing the acts of obedience ("do's"), and the avoidance of sins ("don'ts"), in accordance with Islamic law.

At the end of this work, he writes that the "above is a small part of the science of piety in its exterior and it is the Beginning of Guidance", and for further guidance one should go to the Revival,

¹ op. cit., pp. 87, 90.
...and become acquainted with piety in its interior aspect. When you have built up the interior of your heart in piety, at that the veils between you and your Lord will be removed, the light of mystic knowledge will be revealed to you, there will burst forth from your heart the springs of wisdom, and the supernal realm will be made clear to you.¹

The Revival, which provides this "further guidance", comprises four quarters, each containing ten books. The first deals with divine commandments concerning acts of worship, the second deals with customs, (both essentially being a detailed exposition of Islamic Law). The third and fourth quarters deal with man's inner life — vices, the "things leading to destruction", and the mystical virtues, the "things leading to salvation", respectively. What is presented here is inward piety, or the heart of the spiritual path. This essentially revolves around a purging of all vice followed by the cultivation of virtues.

As Teresa is not overly descriptive of the battle over the passions but usually subsumes this under her pleading the readers to avoid all sin and seek in every way to conform their will to God's, Ghazâlî explicitly describes a six-fold process of how to be victorious in this area. He teaches that it is necessary through introspection to take account of one's passions. There are six stages of "spiritual efforts" to do this: first, one should enter into an agreement with oneself before taking any action that the sole intent is to purify the soul from all passions which will result in salvation; next, one should guard and examine one's passions; third, one should take account of those passions; fourth, one should punish them; fifth, one should "disobey the dictates of passions by constant efforts"; and, finally, one should rebuke them. The seven bodily organs (of eyes, ¹ Ibid., pp. 151-152.
ears, tongue, stomach, sexual organ, hands and feet) are the seven doors to sin, and are to be under the soul’s control like servants to the king. One’s flesh is one’s worst enemy. It,

...runs after evils and flees away from what is good.... Encage it by force and lead it to the divine service of the Lord, prevent it from greed and passions and deprive it of its joys and happiness. If you neglect your baser self, it will be disobedient to you. You will not then be able to overcome it. If you rebuke it always and treat harshly with it, you will be victorious.¹

It can be seen that obedience to God, or fulfillment of the Law, is extremely important, for it is a key means of transforming the seeker. Both would agree that without it one would never attain to the goal. For Teresa, the supernatural life of God (or sanctifying grace) which is present in the soul is either stifled by sin or made operative through obedience. Through having received sanctifying grace, one then has potential for attaining perfection (i.e. to love God and neighbor). One attains union with God — a complete and perfect conformity of one’s will with God’s — when this potential is actualized by consistent obedience to God. And so the practice of obedience is the means by which one reaches union with God, for Teresa. The result would be that one becomes Christ-like (Teresa quotes Paul as an example, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ"). And so the life of God himself is lived through the mystic; his will, desires, thoughts and deeds will reflect God’s character and be in conformity with his nature, and so the mystic acquires the virtues of Christ.

Obedience is equally important to Ghazālī. A psychophysical tie exists between

¹ Revival, p. 441.
the heart and the body, one influencing the other. In Deliverance from Error, Ghazâlî writes that the heart is diseased by ignorance of, and disobedience to God, whereas knowledge and obedience are remedies.¹ To know the workings of these remedies one cannot rely upon reason but needs the light of prophecy. For this reason, it is mandatory that in order to bring the heart back to health, one is to follow the ways of the prophets by following the Sunna. This rationale provides the basis for seeking to imitate the Prophet Muḥammad. Zolondek succinctly summarizes this:

...this knowledge revealed by the prophets [i.e. the Law and Sunna] serves as medicine for the heart and is essential for man's actualizing his divine essence. The prophets in general and Muḥammad in particular are the doctors of the heart whose prescriptions must be followed. They are the spiritual guides for the purification of the heart and for changing one's bad qualities.... The Prophet is no longer simply a lawgiver but a doctor of the heart, the Sunna no longer merely external forms, but medicines for the heart, morality no longer an end but a means of purifying the mirror of the heart.²

Prayer plays a crucial role in the spiritual path, for it too is a means of transformation. For Teresa, it is supposed to bring the seeker to a place of such overwhelming love for God and complete abandonment to Him that one will gladly do His will no matter what the cost or consequences to oneself. Through prayer one should eventually reach the goal where the great exchange — of self and world for God — is totally complete and consistently effective in one's life. Teresa uses the analogy of the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly to describe the transformation of a soul which has experienced the "prayer of union":

¹ op. cit., p. 69.
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When the soul is, in this prayer, truly dead to the world, a little white butterfly comes forth. Oh, greatness of God! How transformed the soul is when it comes out of this prayer after having been placed within the greatness of God and so closely joined with him for a little while — in my opinion the union never lasts for as much as a half hour. Truly, I tell you that the soul does not recognize itself. Look at the difference there is between an ugly worm and a little white butterfly; that is what the difference is here.¹

Prayer likewise is very important for Ghazālī as a means of attaining the goal. It is through prayer and dhikr (remembrance of God) that one eventually comes to experientially realize the unity of God (tawḥīd). Once one is totally consumed by this vision of tawḥīd one enters the stage of union (fanā’). However, more on prayer and the goal of union later.

¹ Interior Castle, p. 343.
III. CHAPTER THREE: THE WAY OF ILLUMINATION

As has been seen, the beginning stage is characteristically ascetic in tone; the emphasis being on a purgation of any and all love and attachment to the world and one's self, so as to be rid of any hindrance from loving God completely. This preparatory stage involves a great deal of active diligence, determination and perseverance on the part of the seeker, and is regarded as a difficult and trying road. However, both agree that it is absolutely necessary, and lays the groundwork for the next stage commonly referred to as the Illuminative Way by writers on mysticism. The more one is purged of vices, stemming from a love of self and world, the more one can be receptive to God's manifestation to the soul. Teresa describes this stage as one involving an entrance into "supernatural", "infused", or "passive" prayer, a state of communion which is the work of God, where one begins to experience contemplation, visions and raptures. Ghazâlî describes this stage as the beginning of gnosis, where one begins to experience illumination, an intuitive knowledge of God and His unity, and of the spiritual realm. It should not be thought that the process of purgation has now ended; it continues until the goal of union has been reached, marking the completion of purgation. However, enough purification of the soul has occurred at this point to allow profound encounters between the seeker and his God.

For Ghazâlî, the seeker is now "mid-way on his journey". He is winning the battle over his flesh, yet has not yet attained to a life completely ruled by the spirit. Nevertheless he,

...has much now to encourage him on his ascent, for he who has
repented of sin, and accepted the obligation of obedience, has the joy of intimate converse with the Most High God and of rest in knowledge of Him and obedience to His will and long periods of fellowship with Him, and if the servant were to obtain no further reward for his efforts than what he finds of the sweetness of obedience and the sense of fellowship in communion with his Lord, that would be enough.¹

Teresa expresses the same thought, that even if the seeker does not fully reach the goal, this stage is enough:

A person feels the greatest delight in his body, and a great satisfaction in his soul. He feels so happy merely with being close to the fount that he is satisfied even without drinking. It does not seem there is anything else for him to desire.²

Regardless of the outcome for the seeker, both agree that he has certain obligations as he journeys. Ghazālī emphasizes that the servant is obligated to a total surrender to God, to constantly strive to do His will, to discipline himself in accordance with that will, and to seek help from God in doing this. For Ghazālī, God’s approaching the seeker,

...does not depend on the servant’s choice, but it is for him to choose to prepare himself for that Divine rapture..., by detaching his heart from all lower attractions....³

Similarly, Teresa writes that one is obligated simply to obey, and if God chooses to give the seeker spiritual consolations, he then will be ready and receptive for them.⁴ However, he always must remember that God is in no way obligated to

¹ Smith, pp. 160-161.
² Way, p. 154.
³ Smith, p. 161.
⁴ Way, p. 145.
give them or that the receiver deserves them. Fortunately, however, God is so merciful that He is just waiting to give to His servants. Smith writes,

The Lord is ever ready to give; our business, says al-Ghazālī, is only to make the place empty and to await the descent of His mercy.¹

Likewise, Teresa writes that through practicing the prayer of recollection one will lay a good foundation:

If then the Lord should desire to raise you to higher things He will discover in you the readiness, finding that you are close to Him.²

And so it is seen that the emphasis is on the seeker focusing upon his being prepared to receive an encounter with his God.

It is interesting to note that both go a bit further than this to say that God has already given revelation to the soul and is already present within. The problem lies in our blindness to that fact. For Ghazālī,

...spiritual states and Divine revelations are actually present within your heart, but you are distracted from them by worldly ties and sensual desires, which veil you from them. But when that veil is raised, then the radiance of the knowledge of God is seen within yourself.³

Teresa teaches that God is already present within and that one's problem is in realizing that: "All the harm comes from not truly understanding that He is

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¹ Smith, p. 161.
² Way, p. 149.
³ Smith, p. 162.
near, but in imagining Him as far away.¹

As has been seen earlier, the development of virtues is very important and integral to the spiritual life for both Teresa and Ghazâlî. Both agree that virtue can only take root in the soul once it has been cleansed from all vice and sinfulness — the greater the cleansing, the more room there is for virtue to grow, by the hand of God. It is the duty of the seeker to purge himself of vice so as to be ready and prepared for God’s grace to plant and grow any virtue. The process of replacing vice with virtue continues in this stage. In fact, one’s position on the spiritual path is designated by the degree of virtue existent in one’s life. Ghazâlî explicitly discusses the mystical virtues of Sufism on this assumption. Teresa believes likewise:

I repeat, it is necessary that your foundation (for the spiritual path) consist of more than prayer and contemplation. If you do not strive for the virtues and practice them, you will always be dwarfs.²

For Teresa, it is ultimately the degree of love one has for one’s neighbor as expressed in deeds which provides a measuring stick for the stage of attainment of the seeker.³ For Ghazâlî, on the other hand, it is the degree of tawḥīd experienced by the seeker which is such a canon, to come to the place where one sees nothing but God. (This will be explained more fully in the following chapter.)

¹ Way, pp. 144, 147.
² Interior Castle, p. 447.
³ Ibid., p. 353.
It has been seen that prayer plays a crucial role in spiritual progress. There are various kinds of prayers and it is in this stage where through prayer the seeker begins to more obviously encounter God. For Teresa, the first three dwelling places are characterized as involving "active prayer". Active prayer is that which is achievable through human effort and ordinary grace. The type of prayer engaged in here includes "mental" or "vocal prayer", and "discursive prayer" or "meditation". Mental or vocal prayer is defined by Teresa as prayer which is not simply said aloud but includes "thinking of whom we are speaking to", to say the prayer with concentration and reflection of what is being said, who is saying it and to whom it is being said.\(^1\) Furthermore, "one can not speak simultaneously to God and to the world",\(^2\) in other words, one can not truly recite a prayer when the mind is wandering or listening to what is being said elsewhere.

Discursive prayer or meditation includes both reflection and affection, one first reflects upon the deeds and nature of God which will lead to affection in the heart, a love for Him. Fr. Ermanno summarizes it well, saying that Teresa insists that one should not,

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\text{...spend all the time of prayer in reasoning, but at the right moment, after due reflection on the truth chosen, to open the heart to God, expressing our deep gratitude to Him for His infinite love, accompanied by the resolution to repay this love by a life of infidelity and of sacrifice.}^3
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\(^1\) Way, p. 129.
\(^2\) Idem.
The fourth dwelling place or room in Teresa's "interior castle" is one which involves a transition from "natural" to "supernatural prayer", or "active" to "passive prayer". Here, one begins to experience God's working in the soul which does not depend on any self-effort or action on the part of the mystic, but occurs spontaneously, entirely under the direction of God.

This begins with experiencing "consolations", which are acquired through self-effort and grace, being mostly the work of the intellect. Through discursive meditation one attains feelings of devotion, joy, desires, sorrow. God's grace continues where self-effort ceases. One reflects and meditates upon God's attributes and works and He in turn will evoke corresponding feelings.

Next follows the "prayer of recollection", which can be either "passive" or "active". The active type "consists in that consciousness of the presence of God in us which results from our own efforts."\(^1\) Here it is realized that God is already present within and what one needs to do is collect all faculties and enter within to be with Him.\(^2\) This is not yet a supernatural state but depends upon one's volition by God's favour. This is a process involving a withdrawal of the senses from outward things, shutting them out, so as not to be distracted, and closing the eyes, "so as to avoid seeing them and so that the sight might be more awake to things of the soul".\(^3\) Thus one focuses upon God in a form of communion by placing oneself into a consciousness of His presence. This is to be actively and often done so that it would become a habitual state of

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 82.
\(^2\) Way, p. 141.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 142.
communion. The purpose of this recollection is to strive for constant union with God, which prepares the seeker to be receptive to supernatural prayer, a passive state of contemplation.¹

Ghazālī holds some similar views to Teresa with respect to prayer. First of all, he also maintains that one should pray with full attention, concentration, and presence of mind, i.e. sincerely, meaning what is being said. The purpose of prayer is to remember God and that can not be done if when one prays one is "absent-minded".² To pray inattentively is not to be considered as prayer, according to Ghazālī. The objective of all religious acts is to remember God, likewise with prayer. "If that object is not attained, there is no use in prayer, as it is very easy to move the tongue with inattention."³

When one is not attentive in prayer the mind does not simply remain idle but is engaged in "the thoughts of the worldly affairs with which it is immediately concerned".⁴ The root cause of such mental distraction in prayer is love for things other than God, for when one loves a thing one remembers it.

Furthermore, one should be aware of God's glory and realize one's helplessness and insignificance before Him — fearing Him and having honour for Him as a condition of the mind. One should also have a firm faith and hope in God's mercies and gifts and lastly, one should be ashamed before Him because of one's

¹ Ibid., p. 149.
² Revival, p. 171.
³ Ibid., p. 172.
⁴ Ibid., p. 173.
sins and neglect in divine service.¹

Besides prayer, Ghazālī implores the need to practice *dhikr* — a common practice among the Sufis — which means the remembrance, recollection of God, to invoke His name. He teaches that *dhikr* is only of benefit when it is done attentively. At first one will find it very difficult to turn one's mind towards God and do *dhikr*, but with practice and God's grace it will give birth to a lover of God and becomes a joy to do.²

Another way of practicing remembrance of God is through meditative reflection. Ghazālī recommends that one considers one's past sins and seeks to remove them. One should also remove any obstacles to doing good deeds and to consider doing good for yourself and other Muslims. One should spend time reflecting over spiritual things, the gifts of God, His rewards and punishments, His attributes and deeds. Such reflection "is the best divine service", and through it one will acquire "knowledge about God as contemplation is the key to the earning of spiritual light", and secondly, one will love God more: "The fruit of meditation is acquaintance or ma'rifah. Honour grows from acquaintance and love grows from honour and deep attachment grows from love."³ Meditation "is to keep the mind towards Him who keeps watch and to keep all thoughts engaged to Him." It is a state of mind where one's heart is always turned towards God and kept engaged in thoughts about Him and His attributes. It bears the fruit of gnosis and also induces heart and limb toward action.

¹ Ibid., pp. 173-174.
² Ibid., p. 296.
³ Ibid., p. 318.
"Pondering over good" is also an important type of meditative exercise. For Ghazâlî, "good thought is the key to light, beginning of deep insight, door to various knowledge and path to ma'rifah and understanding."¹ One should ponder over one's vices and virtues and God's attributes and acts. Daily one should review one's life to see what sins have been committed, repent of them, and determine to eradicate such vices. Continually, one should examine and test oneself to see if vices have been conquered. One should also consider what virtues have been acquired and which are lacking. Then one should also spend much time reflecting on God, not upon the nature of His existence, but upon His handiwork from which one can make inferences about His attributes.²

The next degree of prayer, for Teresa, as one progresses along the spiritual path, is "infused prayer" or "passive recollection". This occurs as a transition from "active recollection" to the "prayer of quiet". Here one senses a gentle drawing inward into recollection, which is not of one's own accord but comes from God. It is not a result of the intellect thinking about God, but occurs spontaneously; when one is not even thinking of Him, one is drawn, pulled towards Him. This stage is less intense than that of the prayer of quiet, being an edifice for it, and usually is a prelude to greater favors, representing the threshold of contemplation.

The prayer of quiet, sometimes called "spiritual delights" by Teresa, is a supernatural state which cannot be produced by one's own effort and represents the first form or beginning of contemplative prayer. Teresa describes it as a

¹ Ibid., p. 453.
² Ibid., pp. 461-462.
delightful absorption in God, resembling both "an interior and exterior swoon".\(^1\) All the "faculties are calmed" and at peace, the will is captive, the faculties are not lost but simply do not want to stir, and the soul understands in another way without the use of the faculties. In the Interior Castle, Teresa draws an analogy between this prayer and consolations with sources of water. Spiritual consolations are like waters that have been gotten through irrigation, only through a process involving much self-effort, as in meditation, whereas spiritual delights are like a natural spring, bursting forth water on its own; it cannot be produced by self-effort, regardless of how great the effort. It is only given when God gives it.\(^2\)

Fr. Ermanno further expounds upon this, saying that "the divine invasion begins in the will, the faculty which directs the other faculties...; the action of God extends from the will to the other faculties."\(^3\) And so at this stage, it is only the will which is in union with God, drawn into a restful silence and peace. Here God is known in a new way, experientially, immediately, and not simply intellectually.

Teresa’s supernatural prayer seems to resemble what Ghazālī calls the "rain of kashf", or gnosis. The purgative process should result in preparing the heart/soul, making it receptive to the descent of God’s mercy. Ghazālī writes that a

\[\text{...servant must cultivate his mind well, make it fit for growing seeds of faith and sincerity and then wait for the mercy of God because no}\]

\(^1\) Way, p. 153.
\(^2\) op. cit., pp. 323ff.
\(^3\) Ermanno, p. 88.
year or month passes without the descent of the mercy of God.¹

Although the mercy of God is continually "raining down", if one's mind is beset with base desires and passions one will be far away from this rain. "If these are not removed," writes Ghazālī, "the illumination of ma'rifah or spiritual knowledge will not come out from the recess of the heart.... The water of mercy that lies hidden in the innermost recess of the heart and which lies covered with refuses like worldly passions..." must be released by removing those passions.²

Through meditation and reflection one comes to enter into the presence of God, and through a constant practice of recollecting God ("practicing the presence of God"), one can become illumined and enabled to contemplate the Vision of God. For Ghazālī, "Godliness is the gate to recollection and recollection the gate to revelation and revelation the gate to the goal of desire (al-fawz al-akbar), which is the meeting with God Most High."³

There are three stages of recollection: with the tongue, with the heart, and beyond both, where one is totally absorbed in God and is led to contemplation, "when the veil is raised between the soul and God. The worshipper has entered into the sanctuary and there is no more need of prayer."⁴

And so it can be seen that Ghazālī's emphasis on meditation and recollection is

¹ Revival, p. 84.
² Ibid., p. 85.
³ Smith, p. 170.
⁴ Ibid., p. 172.
similar to Teresa's prayer of recollection. One constantly directs all concerns towards God, practicing a constant state of introversion where the heart is listening to God, attentive, "preoccupied with Him, all the thoughts directed towards Him, being continually conscious of His Presence."¹ For Ghazālī, one eventually becomes so absorbed in contemplation that one does not see or hear anything around him because of being so completely absorbed in the presence of God. This sounds similar to Teresa's states of rapture where the faculties are suspended.

Furthermore, there is an agreement with respect to the progression in prayer from discursive reflection to affection in the heart, going beyond both to a suspension of faculties, in a state of rapture, where one is simply speechless, motionless, practically unconscious to the world around them and themselves, out of awe in the overwhelming presence of God.

Although Ghazālī does not explicitly delineate this progression, it will be assumed here that he is in line with the tradition of moderate Sufism, of which A. Schimmel writes in her article on mystical prayer in Islam.² She cites Sufi authorities who enumerate three degrees of recollection of God: with the tongue only, (perhaps one could include here Teresa’s discursive meditation), with the tongue and the heart (what Teresa would regard as affective prayer), and a recollection that goes beyond this where one is 'filled with His love and awe of

¹ Ibid., pp. 169-170.
His nearness\(^1\) and the tongue is silent (Teresa's suspension of faculties in a state of contemplation).

Schimmel further describes the ultimate prayer of recollection of the Sufi as being "beyond letter and thought.... To speak without tongues with God, the secret way being opened, is the desire of the Sufi; in increasing love he becomes nothing but heart."\(^2\) Ultimately the state is reached where "the recollector has forgotten all but God, he even forgets recollection, since the cry "O God" involves the consciousness of subject and object, i.e. of separation. He therefore calls: 'Keep God in remembrance till self is forgotten, that you may be lost in the caller, without distraction of caller and call."\(^3\)

We see here a replica of the experience and teaching of Teresa regarding the progression or degrees of prayer. For both Teresa and Ghazâlî, the purpose of \textit{dhikr}, mental prayer, discursive meditation and recollection is to bring the seeker into such a state of mind and heart where one is so conscious of God's presence in the soul that one is left in speechless awe of that fact. God Himself then manifests His reality to the soul, and the mystic comes to experientially know the reality of God and His presence, irrespective of what dogma proclaims. This is the beginning of experiencing union with God.

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 119.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 120.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 121.
The process of purgation prepared the seeker for being receptive to illumination, or supernatural experiences of God. In turn, these divine disclosures further prepared the seeker — transforming him, turning him into a true lover of God from the heart, captivating his will, his whole being. In the previous stage — when the mystic sought to love God above all else — it was done through a great deal of self-effort, being a difficult task, for it was something counter to his previous nature. Whereas now, after such divine disclosures, it would be difficult for the mystic not to love God with his whole being. The disclosures he has received have changed him into a lover of God no longer through self-effort. This transformation which has occurred and continues to occur is the beginning of the stage of union with there being several degrees to attain. Complete transformation which remains permanent is an arrival at the goal of complete union. It needs to be asked, though, exactly what is all meant by "union with God", and what do Teresa and Ghazâlî mean by this term.

It seems that in general there are two types of mysticism which can be described as dualistic and monistic, or what M. Fakhry delineates as the two prototypes of Sufism — "the visionary and the unitary".\(^1\) "In the first variety, the mystic seeks vision, apprehension, illumination; in the second, he seeks union, appropriation, identification."\(^2\) Fakhry writes that Ghazâlî is one of the principal exponents of the former-type, and we could add that Teresa is likewise. Here, he

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 203.
continues, the mystic aims

...to be at one with God, by becoming dead unto himself and alive unto God.... In this condition of oneness, however, the mystic should not lose sight of the absolute distinction (ifrād) of the eternal and the temporal, the Creator and the creature....

With respect to Islam, he must come into a full and certain apprehension (yaqīn) that God is the cause of all, the only Agent/Doer, and hence, "the only genuine Reality". This realization does not mean that the mystic has become identified with God:

At the pinnacle of the mystical vision (al-mukāshafah) only God remains and the mystic recognizes his own non-entity (fanā'); but in this recognition there is no substantial identity, only cognitive unity, no loss of personal reality, only loss of consciousness or selfhood.

The second type of mysticism, in contradistinction to the above, maintains that "the highest stage of the mystical experience is not epistemic, but substantial union." This type culminated in the metaphysical monism of Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240), where any distinction between Creator and creation became eliminated. We could include here as an example from Christian mysticism Jacob Boehme. Keeping in mind, therefore, the type of mysticism we are dealing with, and what the term "union" connotes for Teresa and Ghazālī, I shall proceed to discuss this stage of union.

For Teresa, it is in the fifth dwelling place where one begins to experience the

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1 Ibid., pp. 203-204.
2 Ibid., p. 204
3 Ibid., p. 205.
lowest degree of union, the highest being in the seventh dwelling place called Spiritual Marriage. The first union, called a "union of wills", is one where, with God's help, one keeps one's will fixed on doing, and being in harmony with, God's will. It is necessary that one dies at a cost to one's self, which requires a great deal of effort, with one constantly affirming, "not my will but Thine be done". God does not have to grant great delights in order for someone to attain to this union. All that is needed is provided for in His Son Jesus, writes Teresa, Who taught us the way, which is to love God and one's fellowman. By striving to observe this with perfection one will be doing His will and so will be united with Him.  

If one truly loves God one will love one's fellow man — that is the test. And so union is not simply an experience in prayer but consists of works of love for others.

Such a union of wills is a prerequisite to the next degree of union — the "delightful" or "infused" prayer of union. Here, no self-effort is required, it being totally an act of God where the soul finds itself placed in God, so totally absorbed in Him that the soul enjoys and loves God without knowing how. All the faculties are suspended, as if they were asleep:

There is no need here to use any technique to suspend the mind since all faculties are asleep in this state...to the things of the world and to ourselves. ...During the time that the union lasts the soul is left as though without its senses....

In prior dwelling places and prayers there was room for doubting that one was actually in union with God. Characteristic of this particular prayer is that there

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1 Interior Castle, p. 351.
2 Ibid., p. 336.
is no doubt whatsoever. Furthermore, no matter how great of an effort one may exert to bring this prayer about one would never succeed. God alone can produce it and bring one into such a state, for "He does not want our will to have any part to play, for it has been entirely surrendered to Him. Neither does He want the door of the faculties and of the senses to be opened...."\(^1\)

The result of this prayer is supernatural transformation of the soul for which the ground has been laid by the obedience demonstrated in the union of the soul's will to God's. To quote this passage a second time,

When the soul is, in this prayer, truly dead to the world, a little white butterfly comes forth. Oh, greatness of God! How transformed the soul is when it comes out of this prayer after having been placed within the greatness of God and so closely joined with Him for a little while....\(^2\)

The nearest correlate to Teresa's first degree of union is what Ghazālī calls "God-reliance" or "trust" (tawakkul). It represents the beginning of the experience of union with God. It is based upon tawḥīd, to believe that there is no god but God and that He is omnipotent. To (1) confess this with one's mouth and (2) believe it in one's heart is not enough. One must (3) see it by gnosis, by way of kāshf, by that inner light of intuition that indeed God is the Cause of all events, that He alone is the Doer of all acts, before one can enter that state of God-reliance. The (4) highest state belongs to the one who sees nothing but God, where one even forgets about himself, being totally conscious of God alone. This

\(^{1}\) Ibid., p. 340.
\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 343.
is the stage of the truthful called (fanā’ fi tawḥīd).\(^1\) Ghazālī writes,

> When you believe that there is no master of an action, besides God, that He is All powerful and All knowing..., he must rely on Him and will not look to his own power and strength as there is no power except in God.\(^2\)

Teresa uses marriage as a metaphor to describe mystical union. In the fifth dwelling place previously discussed, the prayer of infused union is experienced. She describes it as being like a meeting between the soul and her Spouse, for it passes in such a short time. Through this prayer such a knowledge of, and love for, God develops, as well as self-consecration, that it is like a bonding that occurs between a couple before they become betrothed.

In the sixth dwelling place the Betrothal occurs, a prayer of "intense union". This is a time of great trials and suffering, for the soul is tested and purified so that it can enter the highest stage of union — Spiritual Marriage. The soul is left so wounded for love of her Spouse after every meeting that she strives always to meet with Him, determined to rid all obstacles to this union. However, the Lord wants her to desire Betrothal more than anything else and to realize that it can occur only with great cost and testing.

There are various ways in which the Lord prepares the soul before He belongs to it completely in marriage. God awakens the soul by various means, called

\(^1\) Revival, pp. 237-239.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 254.
jewels (as gifts to a bride) by Teresa.¹ For example, when one is forgetful of or
distracted from God, He will inflict a deep, painful, yet sweet, wound upon the
soul, as if an arrow were drawn out of the depths of one's being. Or, while in
vocal prayer, a "delightful enkindling" unexpectedly comes, where one is moved
by God to love and worship Him. One will experience locutions, where one is
being spoken to by God, or a certain kind of intellectual vision, where one will
experience God's presence in a unique way — as if He were bodily there but
remained invisible. One may have an imaginative vision of some kind which will
never be forgotten but will always be unexplainable to someone else. The Lord
awakens the soul through various kinds of rapture. One may enter an ecstatic
state of suspension and be revealed secrets, and receive interior understanding
without the use of the faculties, being taught a great deal in a short time. One
may experience a "flight of the spirit" where it seems as though one is carried
off in spirit at a great speed to another place. There also are times of intense
overwhelming jubilation from God, as well as intense suffering, over sins,
offending God, and the weariness of life.

The effects of these raptures are tremendous. They leave "so much virtue, peace,
calm, and improvement in the soul" that, for Teresa, it would be impossible for
them to be the work of the imagination or the devil. There are three things in
particular that are left in the soul "to a very sublime degree: knowledge of the
grandeur of God...; self-knowledge and humility...; the third, little esteem of
earthly things save for those that can be used for the service of so great a

¹ Interior Castle, p. 390.
Fr. Ermanno describes this stage as being full ecstatic, where one’s absorption in God is so intense "that the external senses appear to be riveted on Him.... The soul is no longer conscious of being in the body," and can therefore appear to be dead. Raptures, such as flight of the spirit, seem so sudden and powerful because "the soul has reached the point where it can give itself completely to God and is now free from any attachment...." The soul has now entered full union with God, where all the faculties are totally absorbed in God, but this is only a transitory state. It is in Spiritual Marriage where this becomes permanent.

Just as Teresa writes of the intense longing the mystic has for her Spouse, so too does Ghazâlî write of the state of longing one experiences for God. It is a part of loving God, for, writes Smith,

...every lover longs for the Beloved when absent. Within his heart is the image of the Beloved and he longs that the image should be perfected by vision. The lover of God knows that perfect revelation can be attained only in the life to come, when his contemplation will be uninterrupted and his joy increase evermore, and for that he longs, but he knows that much may be revealed here and now, and he longs to see more of the Beauty and the Glory of God and to attain to perfect union with the Beloved.

However, one progresses past this longing to a higher degree of union.

1 Idem.
2 Ermanno, p. 96.
3 Idem.
4 Smith, p. 180.
Returning to Teresa, she teaches that the distance between Spiritual Betrothal and Marriage is "very great". It is in the seventh dwelling place where the soul reaches the goal of Christian Perfection, which is full and perfect union with God. Here, the union becomes permanent, continuous. As Dicken writes, it "is no longer a divine irruption into a soul.... God is now the soul's own possession...."\(^1\) For the most part, there no longer occur ecstatic experiences, for this union with God "occurs without disturbing the normal exercise of the faculties" for it is now a continuous state.\(^2\) The faculties are no longer suspended, and herein lies a major difference between this stage and all previous ones. Here, God "...desires to remove the scales from the soul's eyes and let it see and understand, although in a strange way, something of the favor He grants it."\(^3\)

This union is continuous, and is experienced as follows:

Each day this soul becomes more amazed, for these Persons never seem to leave it anymore, but it clearly beholds...that they are within it. In the extreme interior, in some place very deep within itself ...it perceives this divine company.\(^4\)

Previously, the favour of union would pass quickly and afterwards the soul is left without the divine company, just as two candles which are joined become one flame but can again be separated into two candles with two flames. In Spiritual Marriage, however, the union that occurs is permanent, the soul always

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\(^2\) Ermanno, p. 99.  
\(^3\) Interior Castle, p. 450.  
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 430. 
remains in the company of its Lord in the very centre of the soul, like a stream which enters the ocean can no longer be separated from it.\(^1\) Teresa understands this to be the meaning of Paul’s words that whoever is united to the Lord becomes one with Him and that now to live is Christ, the self has fully died. This will be seen to be a literal reality and one will powerfully experience "that it is God who gives life to the soul".\(^2\)

A major difference in this dwelling place from all others is that there "are almost never any experiences of dryness or interior disturbance of the kind that were present at times in all the other dwelling places, but the soul is almost always in quiet."\(^3\) The soul "does not move from that center nor is its peace lost."\(^4\) However, "it should not be thought that the faculties, senses, and passions are always in this peace; the soul is, yes."\(^5\)

Sometimes there is a relapse from this state of peace to the tumultuous state one naturally was in before. However, this would only be for a brief time to keep one humble and not forgetful of what a great favor this union is.

As the longing of Teresa’s betrothed became satisfied, Ghazâlî likewise writes of the fellowship and satisfaction the lover finds with God. The longing of the seeker for the absent Beloved is replaced with joy over the intimacy and nearness of God’s presence. Ghazâlî writes,

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 434.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 435.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 441.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 435.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 437.
'No one enters into fellowship with God but one who has given much time to the recollection of Him, for perfect fellowship means that the mind and the understanding have become absorbed in the joy of inward converse with their Lord, as one who talks with his Beloved.'

The result of entering into such communion is satisfaction, "his complete acquiescence in the Divine Will". For "the lover of God, the will of the Beloved and His good pleasure are what he seeks and if he suffers affliction thereby, yet he is satisfied."

Such complete surrender to and joy in God's will will result in a heart completely at peace and in joy. This comes from an inner light of certainty, and when

the excellence of God's ordering of things is made plain and dissatisfaction and disgust find no place. The heart is at rest when it is filled with the sweetness of love, for the true lover is satisfied with all that is done by the Beloved, and it seems to be his own desire.

Both agree that there is no one way of attaining this goal of union, although the general features outlined will most likely be present. However, because the most important factor in this journey is God's grace, the seeker may attain the goal in a flash or not at all in this life. Ghazālī writes that,

...some of them did not in their ascent follow the gradual process we have described, nor was the ascent long for them. At the very beginning, outstripping their compeers, they attained to a knowledge of

1 Ghazālī as quoted by Smith, p. 182.
2 Idem.
3 Ibid., p. 183.
4 Ibid., pp. 184-185.
the All the Holy and the Divine transcendence. They were overcome at the first by what overcame others at the last.\(^1\)

Just as Teresa had several brief experiences of union which eventually became a permanent state in what she calls Spiritual Marriage, Ghazālī describes a similar experience:

This absorption at first will be like a flash of lightning, lasting but a short time, but then it becomes habitual, and a means of enabling the soul to ascend to the world above, where pure and essential Reality is manifested to it...and at last it looks upon God face to face.\(^2\)

Here it is seen that union is consummated through what is called the Beatific Vision. For Ghazālī,

Gnosis is made perfect in the Vision of God and the contemplation of Him within the heart. This is contemplation in its perfection, for that measure of contemplation which was granted to the traveller who was mid-way, was but "permission" to enter upon the way which leads to Union, but this is "finding" (\(\text{wajd}\)) what was sought, it means entering in and the actual experience (\(\text{dhawq}\)) thereof.\(^3\)

Teresa writes that she entered into this Spiritual Marriage through a vision:

When the soul is brought into that dwelling place, the Most Blessed Trinity, all three Persons, through an intellectual vision, is revealed to it...., and through an admirable knowledge the soul understands as a most profound truth that all three Persons are one substance and one power and one knowledge and one God alone.... Here all three Persons communicate themselves to it, speak to it, and explain those words of the Lord in the Gospel: that He and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with the soul that loves Him and keeps His

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1 Ibid., pp. 192-193.
2 Ibid., p. 191.
3 Ibid., p. 187.
commandments.  

As union transformed Teresa’s soul and led to an unshakable peace of the spirit, regardless of tumultuous surroundings and circumstances, so too for Ghazâlî, the soul has become tranquillized (al-nafs al-muṭma’innah). The soul that has completely returned to its Lord is now at rest. This is because he has finally attained union through having passed away from himself into God, called fanâ’ fi tawhîd, i.e. "losing oneself in the Unity". Attaining this, he becomes one of “those who Attain” (al-wâṣlûn), to whom all veils hiding God have been rendered and separation is replaced with union.

Among “those who Attain”, there are two classes. Ghazâlî writes that,

...for one class the whole content of the perceptible is consumed away — consumed, obliterated, and annihilated; yet the soul itself remains contemplating the absolute Beauty and Holiness.... In them, then, the seen things, but not the seeing soul, are obliterated.

He continues, saying that there is a second class that surpasses this,

...among whom are the Few of the Few; whom...the majesty of the Divine Glory obliterate; so that they are themselves blotted out, annihilated.... Nothing remaineth anymore save the One, the Real; and the import of His word, 'All perisheth save His countenance’ becomes the experience of the soul.... Such is the ultimate degree of those who Attain.

1 Interior Castle, p. 430.
2 Smith, p. 174.
4 Ibid., p. 173.
This is a state where the seeker has "...so passed away from himself that he feels nothing of his bodily members, nor of what is passing without, nor what passes within his own mind".\(^1\) He continues, saying that if any thought or awareness of one’s state of absorption exists, he has not journeyed far enough: "For perfect absorption means that he is unconscious not only of himself but of his absorption. For \textit{fanā’} from \textit{fanā’} is the goal of \textit{fanā’}."\(^2\)

To be totally oblivious to all else correlates quite well with Teresa’s ecstatic states of rapture where she seemed to be in a state of unconsciousness. \textit{Fanā’} could also be seen as a correlate to Teresa’s experience of dying to one’s self in order to live in Christ, where one loses all self regard. The directing principle of one’s life is no longer one’s self or one’s higher good but God and His will. As one dies to self in order to live in Christ, so too for Ghazālī, one passes away from one’s self in order to subsist in God (\textit{baqa’}). For him, one is to see everything through the eyes of God, from the standpoint of the truth of His Unity, that He is the Cause of everything. These saints, or friends of God, writes Ghazālī,

...see naught but Him in this world or the world to come.... If any form presents itself to their outward gaze, their inward vision passes beyond it to Him... they are disturbed only for His sake, their joy is in Him alone.... Their grief is only in Him and their longing is only for that which is to be found in His presence, they are aroused only for Him, from Him is all that they hear and it is to Him that they give heed, since He hath closed their eyes to all but Himself and hath made them deaf to all words save His.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Ghazālī as quoted by Smith, p. 190.
\(^2\) Idem.
\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 196-197.
Shehadi distinguishes three aspects of what Ghazālī means by union with God. First of all, this union can be understood in terms of *qurb*, or "likeness". Man should seek to live out the "image of God" that is in him, by becoming like God in terms of his moral character to the point where nothing will remain in his character that is not "God-like", and it is as if only God (i.e., His character) is within him. Teresa would call this becoming "Christ-like".

Secondly, there is a subjective *tawḥīd* with God, where the mystic has continually sought to turn away from the world towards God. He not only seeks to become like God, but seeks to shut off his attention from all else but God, and passes away from his self to be entirely absorbed with God. It is a state of union with God which occurs in man's consciousness where God remains as the sole content of his consciousness, the sole object of his love. As has been seen, Teresa strongly admonishes that one should aim for this as well.

Lastly, there is an objective *tawḥīd*, where the mystic realizes the truth that only God really exists, that "there is no he but He". It is the realization that God is the sole necessary existent and all else is contingent. All else has no reality in the ultimate sense, although it does exist, which "means that in themselves...they do not have the principle of their existence within them, but depend on Him." And so objective unification occurs when one attains to this intuitive theocentric perspective of seeing that only God is ultimately real. However, this does not mean, for neither Ghazālī nor Teresa, that man literally

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2 Ibid., p. 31.
becomes God and is identified with Him.

It is in this latter aspect of union, understood in terms of the Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd*, where there is a divergence in the thoughts of Teresa and Ghazâlî. Here, the emphasis is on experientially knowing that God is the sole Doer, the only true Agent, of an act. All that occurs is the will of God, and nothing happens that is not. The Sufi seeks to be content with that will, accept it, be thankful for it no matter what it may entail. For Teresa as a Christian, on the other hand, there is not such a strong emphasis on Divine determinism. Not everything that occurs is the direct will of God, even though it may be allowed to occur. Man has the freedom to do or not to do God's will. The aim for the mystic is to bring his will into complete alliance with God's for there are many agents and doers. Likewise, Ghazâlî's "Vision of God" differs from that of Teresa – the Unity of God versus the Trinity. And so it is seen that the content of the Beatific Vision and what is meant by union is informed by dogma, and hence differences appear.

However, ultimately, Ghazâlî maintains that it is better to leave the mystical experience unarticulated, for it is beyond human language. He writes that the Sufis,

...by the means of this contemplation...rise by degrees to heights which human language cannot reach, which one cannot even indicate without falling into great and inevitable errors....
Those who have reached that stage should confine themselves to repeating the verse:

What I experience I shall not try to say:
Call me happy, but ask me no more.¹

CONCLUSION

I shall now summarize the findings presented in this research. It has been seen that Ghazâlî and Teresa teach a similar progression along the spiritual path, identifying similar issues, methods, experiences and goals, to the degree that a type of synthesis of their teachings could be presented as was done here.

First of all, they teach that spirituality has to be built upon orthodoxy. One first has to be an orthodox Christian or Muslim before one can embark upon the spiritual path. Furthermore, one can never reach some "higher" spiritual state which will sanction an abandoning of orthodoxy. Secondly, the most crucial factor for progress of any kind is God's grace. Spiritual growth is seen to be the work of God with man's help. If God does not chose to draw the seeker to Himself, and disclose His presence, the seeker will remain in the dark — God can not be manipulated.

They teach that the beginning of the path is essentially ascetic in tone — revolving around the purging of one's self of all love and attachment to things that gratify the self, which includes the world. Such egocentricism is seen as sinful and in need of repentance. Then it is to be renounced, the seeker resolving to love God above everything else with his whole being. This exchange of one's self and the world for God is demonstrated through a life of constant and perfect obedience to God's will. Once one chooses God over all else, they teach that one has entered a battlefield, where the spirit will be warring against the flesh. Over time through constant mortification — both exterior and interior
— the spirit gains the victory. The vices which are rooted in a love of the flesh are replaced with virtues rooted in a love of God. The result is that through such obedience and discipline the seeker restores the "image of God", or becomes "Christ-like". The eradication of vice releases the angelic qualities in man to rule, for Ghazālī, or the divine nature that one partakes of, for Teresa. The result of this process of purgation is a soul that will be prepared for, and receptive to, divine disclosures.

This process of purgation continues until the soul is permanently purged of its egocentricity and has become completely theocentric. The stage of illumination can be said to begin when the seeker begins to experience supernatural encounters with God which happens, by the will of God, when the soul is detached enough from the world and devoutly seeking after God.

At this point, the seeker is content enough, delighting in loving and obeying God, irrespective of whether or not he receives "supernatural favours". Nevertheless, he is obligated to obey and love God no matter what happens, even if he never receives a supernatural touch.

Similar degrees of and progression in prayer is seen. Both teach that one needs to pray with attentiveness and sincerity — not "absent-mindedly". One progresses from formal, vocal prayer to meditation, discursive prayer — reflecting over God's deeds and attributes which will evoke affection — a love for and praise of God. And so prayer begins with the mind but then moves to the heart. Through the practice of recollection, or the remembrance of God (i.e. "practicing the presence
of God") one eventually realizes the reality of His presence. One then begins to experience supernatural encounters with God. Here, no self-effort is involved, God draws the seeker to Himself, who becomes absorbed in God as though he were in a swoon. Prayer progresses then from the mind to the heart and then beyond both to contemplation, where one is absorbed in God in a state of rapture. Here, one is in such a state of awe before God, that he is practically unconscious to the world about him.

These divine disclosures further transform the seeker. Previously, he sought after God out of self-effort, but now it is the work of God. After such encounters, one cannot help but love God completely. This is the beginning of the stage of union.

These encounters are sporadic and brief, leaving the soul with an intense longing for God. Longing becomes replaced with satisfaction in union where there no longer is any separation. For Teresa, the "Divine Company" never leaves the soul, just as a river which has entered the ocean can no longer be separated from it. For Ghazālī, the soul enters peace, is "tranquillized", when it finally is illuminated to the perfection of God's will. It then no longer is dissatisfied but rejoices over whatever God does, as though it were his own desire.

Both agree that union first comes in brief periods, eventually becoming habitual and permanent. Also, it is agreed that God can bring one there suddenly or gradually. Finally, they teach that it is through a vision of God that one attains to complete union. The effect of union on the soul is that it is completely
transformed to being theocentric as opposed to its natural egocentric state — the self no longer lives/fana' but Christ lives/baqā'.

It was seen that there were points of differences. Besides what was seen with respect to repentance, the major difference was seen in the discussion of union with God. There was common ground between them when union was understood in terms of the seeker becoming completely absorbed in God's presence, becoming theocentric in his outlook, transformed so that the ruling principle of his life was no longer himself but God. However, there were different emphases.

Ghazālī understands union from the perspective of the Islamic doctrine of tawḥīd. Union with God means that the seeker has become illumined and intuitively, experientially realizes the fact that God alone is God, that He is the sole Doer/Agent. He sees moment by moment how every event is of the hand of God, how all that occurs is His will. It is this vision of God as the sole Actor which is the goal for Ghazālī. The degree of this vision provides the "measuring stick" for determining one's proximity to the goal.

For Teresa, it is the degree to which one loves one's neighbor that is such a canon. She emphasizes that the goal is to completely love God, as proven by perfect obedience in doing His will, which revolves around laying down one's life for another. It is assumed here that not everything that occurs is the will of God, but rather, one needs to unite one's will with His. This involves a struggle for one's carnal nature is egocentric in character and resists action that is "selfless". Ghazālī would agree but the difference is that for him, to unite one's
will with God's means that one realizes that all that occurs is God's will — the emphasis is on realization instead of action.

Furthermore, there seem to be different emphases with respect to God's disclosures to the soul. Teresa emphasizes a personal, relational encounter with God, whereas for Ghazâlî, the encounter is of a noetic nature. Teresa does not use the term "gnosis", and only occasionally describes her supernatural experiences as being a reception of divine knowledge. The revelations which she receives are of God Himself. In contrast, Ghazâlî writes of these disclosures as being a reception of gnosis, spiritual insight, and knowledge of divine things.

Overall it appears that dogma circumscribed spiritual experience for both mystics, because both sought not to violate orthodoxy. However, since spirituality focuses upon the subject instead of the object of religious experience (as discussed in the Introduction), the realm of dogma resided in the background. The result seen here is a close affinity in the teachings of Ghazâlî and Teresa in the area of spirituality.
V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography consists of only those sources actually used in the writing of this thesis. It is in no way intended to be a comprehensive bibliography of the writings of St. Teresa and al-Ghazālī or of the commentaries thereon.

A. PRIMARY SOURCES


B. SECONDARY SOURCES


Fakhry, Majid, "Three Varieties of Mysticism in Islam" in *The International*


