



# Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI IESUM

Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

## **Cardinal Victor Fernández: “The Mystical Passion: Spirituality and Sensuality”**



### ***A Profound Disfiguration of Mystical Theology***

## **It is embarrassing.**

Academically as much as morally.

This is a book by a mature 36-year-old man that should never have been printed; not because it is lascivious (it is) but because it is the product of a mind that had no acquaintance with serious study and no founding in Catholic primary sources — a “cardinal sin,” if you will, of any author, especially a Catholic author who illicitly invokes the names of saints and in so doing pretends to adduce their support for a thesis that is not simply contrary to their writings, but is a caricature of them. This is damnable!

Fernández was not, as he also pretends to be, still a formative young man who later wrote “more serious” treatises on Mystical Theology such *The Healing Force of Mysticism* and *The Transforming Force of Mysticism*, neither title of which inspires me to believe that they contain any more mature theological insights than their “less mature” works, including *Heal Me with Your Mouth: The Art of Kissing*.

Fernandez's grasp of Mystical Theology is shockingly inadequate. Consider the following:

*“[in] a kind of fulfilling orgasm in our relationship with God ... God manages to touch the **soul-corporeal** centre of pleasure.”*

**Or:**

*“The mystical experience God touches the most intimate centre of love and **pleasure** ...”* [emphases added]

These are but two absolutely fundamental misconceptions, or complete distortions, of the very *nature* and *possibility* of mystical experience articulated by the sources he appeals to.

**I have argued elsewhere**, with clear and indisputable citations to primary sources that:

- “*Sensuous negation*, or what St. John of the Cross, [the First Doctor of Mystical Theology in the Catholic Church], calls the “Night of the Senses.” is

therefore absolutely necessary to that union in which the soul becomes one with God.”

- “In the opening sequences of Book One of the Ascent, St. John discussed *the night of the senses* relative to the will. There we found that the disparity between God and created nature emphasized the lack of proportion, of commensurability, between God and the soul in its relation to God through created nature, and in so doing demonstrated *the inherent impossibility of a sensuous apprehension of God*. And the conclusion, of course, was that if God is to be apprehended at all, he must be apprehended extra-naturally; *not through a sensuous manifold accessible to the will — nor, as St. John will now argue, through any conceptualization available through ordinary understanding.*”
- “*the contemplative must not defer to the senses; however credible their reports may appear. Moreover, St. John argues, in their tangible dimensions, these sensuous communications cannot, in reality, bear any proportion to, and are in fact the ontological opposite of, the spiritual reality which they purport to convey.*”

*The Metaphysics of Mysticism*  
*A Commentary*  
*on the Mystical Philosophy of*  
*St. John of the Cross*

What is more, *absolutely fundamental* to Western Christian Mysticism is the the notion of *apophasis*, the understanding of God by a negation of what He is not, commonly called the *Via Negativa*, or the “Negative Way”. Because of the ontological disparity between man and God inasmuch as God is *eternal* where man is temporal, *infinite* where man is finite, God is *absolute* where man is contingent, God is Uncreated *Spirit* and man created spirit and flesh who was created in *imago Dei* (the image of God) in time and not eternity, and we cannot predicate of God *anything* “corporeal” for everything *sensible* and *corporeal* is *eo ipso* not God nor predicable of God since it is material, temporal and finite.

The absolutely contradictory and utterly incoherent notion of something that is “*soul-corporeal*” is nothing less than an absurdity, and to argue that it can be radicated in some imaginary “centre of pleasure” is beyond absurd. To understand,

in any measure, God reflected, however analogically, in the completely *sensual* act of sexual climax is not simply bizarre, it is an utter failure to grasp even the most fundamental elements in Christian theology and philosophy.

More absurd still is that this less than pedestrian mind is directing the very office — *the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith* — where the most mature and incisive intellect is required in making determinations concerning the very *Doctrine of the Faith* itself. That it should have been given by Francis to a man of such questionable character and limited intellectual ability is astounding! It is the highest office in the Church next to the papacy and should not have been given as a *reward* for loyalty, or as a *favor* to a friend and fellow-countryman with the same horizontal and anthropocentric agendum. The Church is far beyond the narrow and calculated reach of any individual who would fashion what is divine into the marred image of a man.

That Fernández has chosen to articulate this most superlative love of God for the soul and the reciprocal love of the soul for God, not just in sensuous terms, but in what is tantamount to the pornographic terms which he appears to use in characterizing love in any of its manifestations is not just “regrettable”, or even “scandalous” — it is, as I have said earlier and now say with greater vigor still, *damnable*.

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and Author of  
*The Metaphysics of Mysticism*  
A Commentary  
on the Mystical Philosophy of  
St. John of the Cross

January 12, 2024  
Feast of the Holy Martyrs Zoticus, Rogatus, Modestus, Castulus, and forty soldiers  
In Africa



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