In the Same Language

Life Lessons from the Sacred River

Introduction: What a smile can teach

It may be that the memory with which I begin this reflection could be perceived as trivial, banal, pedestrian. But as grace builds on nature, so do philosophical ponderings emerge from what is most basic and elementary to our lives. And so, I remember here a happy clip from the early days of my childhood when life seemed simpler, the days less hurried and harried. As sociological backdrop, children are raised with the soundtracks of their parents' younger lives, such that those soundtracks are adopted, at least provisionally, as the child's own. So it was with me. I remember well the voice of Stephen Stills wafting through the living room in the wistful opening lines of CSN's *Wooden Ships*, gently crooning, "When you smile at me, that is something I can understand, 'cause that is something everybody everywhere does in the same language". I suppose that I gave not a lot of thought to those words in my less reflective younger days, days which did not require the introspection that our more advanced years bring. But I do see now the simple wisdom of those words, and how thematically apt they are as applied to the seemingly countless diversifications of human life as lived not only in our own time, but in any time.

A smile is disarming, expressive, warm, inviting. It establishes us on the common ground of gladness, a joy which may be occasioned from an experience without, but which upon deeper analysis is derived from nowhere but *within*. That "within" is a place that seems to be privatized, uniquely one's own; but really, it is a shared space, a well from which issues forth so many other "samenesses", just like that of our uniquely flashed yet shared smile. The universal language of human life is captured in many ways, but there is something about a smile that clears the path and levels the ground between us. There is something understood there, something that is precious, beautiful and free. Stills was right: When you smile at me, I *can* understand. This smile becomes paradigmatic for *so many* of our lived expressions. And so, with this smile in mind, I turn to a landscaped archetype that can worthily hold it: *The River*, and what its rushing shores hold for the stillness and the sameness of the souls who abide by their waters.

Children at play

On the banks of the Ganges River in Rishikesh, on a cold but bright January day, I saw something that delighted my heart, but I did not know why: Very small children—two to three years old—being who and what they are as expressed in their primary language of *play*. Laughing, crying, running, pouting, being coy, and *never*—as is so often the case with their adolescent and adult counterparts—"bored". They were learning from each other, teaching each other, teaching me. I have seen this very scene acted out in many lands in my

life, other river beds in distant places with the same little actors at play: the shores of the Shanandoah, the banks of the Tiber, the cold edges of the Mississippi...The movement of the River—whatever the River may be—a motion-filled backdrop for predictably stable yet ever-flowing sounds and sights of the dramatic comedy that is the life not only of a child, but of any human person. A marvel, that in such short spans of time such an explosion of expressions encapsulating the whole human experience can occur, and the players remain in the emotive, imaginative, and ever-active thick of things to enact their roles: happiness, sorrow, disappointment, triumph, loss, victory, concord, discord, contentedness, wonder...all of these emerge and recede, shift-shape and come back again in those little faces as they stage this dress rehearsal for the rest of us watching. They—indifferent to spectators and to more so-called mature social conventions—proceed with the unwritten protocols that many of us have forgotten in years said to be wiser. "Those who hear not the music think the dancers mad" says an aphoristic proverb; but those little ones, those little dancers, they are not mad. Not at all. In fact, perhaps they in their selfless non-circumspection are at the peak of their sanity and we—the literate, the deliberate, the educated, the cultured—are what happens when that sanity gradually recedes into refinement; a transformation and a loss all at once.

Why, this delight of my heart on that day? Because of the *truth* that childhood bespeaks, the truth so plainly spoken by Jesus who said, "Unless ye turn and become like little children, ye will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mat. 18:3). Heaven itself is a forgotten, almost taboo theme for us who are too sophisticated to hear it. Give me *this* life here and now, not promises of the next, not glimpses of the beyond. And *childhood?* We strive throughout it to reach a place which at last transcends it, but does not include it. At least, these are the protestations of the conventional and practical mind, more reactive than thoughtfully responsive in defending its right to autonomy, its freedom from nostalgic euphemism. A preacher will often interpret those beckoning words of Christ by way of a distinction: Be child*like*, not child*ish*. I, too have taught the same. It is clean, and who could argue with this? But while this is a well-meaning admonition for adults, it is not an entry into the mind of a child, nor, for that matter, into the mind of Christ—minds ("child-mind" and "Christ-mind") which do not so clearly differ from one another as our grownup minds do from the child's mind, and thus, from Christ's mind.

Christ says, after all, to *turn*, which is already an implied verdict: We have turned *away*. Christ is not speaking in this phrase to children. They need not be reminded, nor told to be what they are. *We*, wise in our own and the world's glittered esteem, are being told to be as *we* once were, but have only forgotten. Christ, as he often does, calls us *home*, not to a place, a land, an ethnic or cultural identity, but to the place where no forgetting lasts for long: The place of the *heart.* This motif of "remembering who we are" echoes throughout all of our robust spiritual traditions, and there is something comforting about it no matter the language or colors in

which it is cloaked. In the pursuit of God and higher things, no matter how this pursuit be named, ours is not an assumption or a becoming of that which we are not, of that which must be obtained because it is somehow out of our reach. It is an uncovering of the forgotten realms of being which have never left us, but from which we have become so deftly accustomed to turn away. *Constantly*. The spiritual life is, then, remembrance, not acquisition; returning (literally, a *turning again,* specifically, to that which we most truly are), not arriving. This means that the pursuit of That which requires no pursuit at all implies an incredible *closeness* and even more, an *identification,* a oneness—even closer than what the word "union", beautiful as it is, bespeaks. This is not a place that we seek, not a destination. It is an *in-touch-ness*, a deep *beingness*. "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10), says the psalmist. Listen, here, in those richly simple words to the diagnosis. And listen to the means: The diagnosis is a restless wandering. Therefore, *be still*. And the means to attain what has never been lost is *knowledge* ("*Know*", says the One to our soul), an ever-present arrival point "gained" through stillness itself. How complicated we earnest seekers make it! Thus, the words of Christ invoked earlier which ring comforting and true: "Become as little children", which is to say, "Become as you *are*".

I return to "delight", a phenomenon glimpsed in God's law which itself is the good and wise one's joy (cf. Ps. 1:2), nowhere more archetypically evident than in the universal language of a child's *play*. Yes, there are changes seemingly great between little ones and the older ones whom they grow to be. But the changes are, in the words of Western philosophy, *accidental,* not essential. An Eastern philosophical perspective reminds us that those changes, spanning six in their basic number—birth, existence, growth, transformation, decay, and death[1]—are of the body and the mind. But the *isness* bespoken by that undeniable *I-sense* which laces like a golden thread through our experience and all of the changing phenomena which comprise that experience is the unchanging constant throughout. Life stories and all of their constituent parts *do* change. But *I*, essentially, remain unchanging. *This* was my delight at the River that day, the delight implied in Jesus' teachings on children and our becoming like them. The delight was in a truth unchanging, a remarkable, unassailable *fact* of existence. The sameness of our being—the sameness of you and I and all of us—is demonstrated in the sameness of our play, and our children are little living reminders of this sacred sameness in their variety of expression. We all play in the same language.

[1] The *ṣaḍ bhāva vikāraḥ* ("six modifications of being") are traditionally enumerated as listed above, but more specifically and accurately as dynamic actions rather than static qualities: being born, existing, growing, transforming, decaying, and dying (*jāyate, asti, vardhate, vipariṇamate, apakṣīyate,* and *vinaśyati*).

Expanding shores

But then, I saw more: Children are our entry point into the wonder of oneness rediscovered. But because we *do* grow, because we *do* change in the "life-story-ness" aspects of our being, our insights frequently proceed *through* the entry point of childhood into further discoveries at still different stages. The *stages themselves* differ, but their demonstrative lessons continue along the self-same lines, reminding us through their emerging complexities of the essential sameness of us all. A river seems to be an almost perfect place for this lesson to be taught across the lifespan, not only of our own individual lives, but also of the longer-spanned life of our world. River banks have always been hubs of life. Their running, rushing waters are not only a metaphor for life, but what makes life *be* life in its organicity and sentiency. Where there is no water, there *is* no life, and this law is a common denominator for all of us, no matter our varying means, aptitudes, privileges or any number of the other accidents of birth which more normally divide than unite.

Great cultures have grown at the teeming edges of the waters of life, for these waters make possible any number of treasures and transactions: commerce and trade; transport and livelihood; leisure and lollygagging; war, conquest, romance, rest, and troves of endless inspiration for poets and pedants alike. Rivers thus become an encapsulation of all of life's stages and lessons learned therein, from the beautiful to the mundane, the tragic to the quotidian, and all other surveyed and searched touchstones, even and especially those that go unrecognized. This, too—the "unrecognition" of the river that gives life, that *is life*—is a metaphor for *our* lives, and specifically, for what most singularly enables our lives to *be* at all—God, Consciousness, Spirit, or whatever appellative may suit each of our preferences and propensities most snugly. It is That without which no living is possible, and yet which because of Its very invisibility and intangibility makes It the first forgotten gift, even as It is our most needed and necessary one.[2] It is not that we are ungrateful (although it is not that we are *not*), but that, in the words of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II.1.1), the Lord "pierced the senses to turn outward"[3], thus rendering us who wield them somehow weakened or dulled with regard to the things of the Spirit by way of a kind of perpetual propensity toward an *outward* view, rather than to what is more subtle, more unseen through an inward gaze. This is all by way of saying that the necessariness of the waters

[2] Cf. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* I.3, in which the disciple approaches the teacher to ask, "Revered sir, what is that by the knowing of which all this becomes known?" and similarly, *Kena Upaniṣad* I.2, and 5 – 8, in response to a similar question wherein the teacher's answer is, "It is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of speech, the Life of life, and the Eye of the eye...[it is] That which cannot be expressed by speech, but by which speech is expressed[,] That which cannot be apprehended by the mind, but by which, they say, the mind is apprehended[,] That which cannot be perceived by the eye, but by which the eye is perceived[,] That which cannot be heard by the ear, but by which the hearing is perceived..." (in *The Upanishads: Volume one*, ed., trans., and introduction, S. Nikhilananda, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York 1949, 262 and 229 – 235).

[3] *The Upanishads,* trans. E. Easwaran, Nilgiri Press, Tomales 1961, 83. Compare Nikhilananda's even more evocative translation of the same verse, "The self-existent Supreme Lord *inflicted an injury* upon the sense-organs in creating them with outgoing tendencies" (cit., 159).

that feed us is often unseen, yet for the very reason of their unpretentious hiddenness, these waters are able to remain for us the vitalest of points of contact between earth and man, between man and man, between man's stages and seasons of growth across the lifespan. These waters move as sacred pointers to the life beyond time and space by allowing a ripely set stage for the vivacious fullness of life's living here and now. It is not just children, then, who frolic at these waters' edges. These little ones represent just the first explorations and emanations of a slow-growing organism which cranes to see and to be seen, to hear and to be heard, to love and to be loved, to live for what is worth dying for, to die for all that was worth living for. And it all happens here, at the River, whatever and wherever the River may be.

Growing

There was more to be seen, more to be learned on that day. Contemplatively inclining the ear of my heart and the eye of my mind, I raised my gaze through proverbial and imaginative memory to recall these banks as I have experienced them on other days, still full of life, but differently sparked. This gaze, at once external and internal, took me beyond the enchanting cries and gladdening laughter of the tiny, and found quickly in their place the struggle of the youth who strive to seek and find even in their seeming indecision. I remember those days well; better, sadly, than the days of littleness...why does God, the Divine Mind, so safely hide away from our own mind those youngest of years when simplicity ruled the day with the cares of the world still far from our knowing? But that is a digression, wistful, and perhaps even a diversion from the consideration of what and who I saw with eyes trained to further banks.

The youth there were learning all too soon the fabrications and evasions of adult life: How *not* to be seen in truer, more vulnerable identity, by way of showing forth a barely masked indifference, an unassured surety which both cloaks and reveals. Esteem is such a fragile thing, built on precarious rocks which lend their stability for only so long. This, I remind myself, is Erikson's "Identity vs. Role Confusion" writ large, being lived here and now in *this* young man, *this* young woman, not in a text book or in the annals of socio-psychological theoretics. Compassionating, I could not help but wonder at the mechanism at work: In our trying to be what we already are, we add to the "I am" and take from it at the same time. Our constructed identity deconstructs and detours from the Self longing to be revealed, such that the longing increases with the hiding, the staving off, the turning away. Our layers of protection also obscure, and the Truer Self is awash in and pervades the content of the additives we accrue.

But still, it was coy, charming, and not in the condescending sense. I remember well what it was to be *him,* the young man across the way, fully aware of being fully in view, yet comporting himself aloofly, almost as if to be perceived as noticing the people and the world around him would be a condescension to something

lesser. What I saw most evidently, though, was a ritual of courtship enacted, not in the more classically chivalrous or formal sense of the word, but in the sense that is absolutely inescapable, especially at this age that I was watching *in medio* before my eyes: Him, noticing her. She, pretending not to notice him noticing her. Him, nonchalantly trying just a *bit* too hard to not notice her noticing-not-noticing him noticing...and the cycle of silent but perfectly cued interbeing and interaction cascaded and continued with the explosive devices of their minds and hearts saying all at the same time, "See me! Turn *away* from me! Come near! Flee *far*! Forever! *Never*!" The anxiety, the anticipation, the not-so-sureness about it all was palpable. We all court in the same language.

Further shores, further stages

Down the bank I wandered, past the sauntering droves of the youth just witnessed and toward what their hopes were primed for, at least in a great many cases: a love that is forever. Their parents may have been coupled through an arranged marriage, but many of India's young seek what those in the West have long enjoyed, for better or for worse: a so-called "love marriage". But whether arranged by the providence of family and society, or the even deeper providential lines revealed through sentiment become desire, affection, and compassionate commitment, it remains true that the apex of the lovers' story on a wedding day never ceases to draw the attention and to stir the hopes of onlookers, be they more or less disinterested as I was, or radically interested as the parents, family, and friends in tow were. Now, there are weddings, and there are weddings. In India, it is always of the second sort. *Everything* is decorated in every sense of the word—sounds become crisper; colors, brighter; laughter, more voluminous; and ritual becomes even more solemn and pronounced in this land which is positively founded on ritual's moorings and all of the depth and symbol that it holds.

But what is indicative of this particular nuptial joy in a most superlative degree is the *dance* that accompanies it. That dance is itself cloaked in all of the accoutrements mentioned above. It is visual, sonic, tactile, multi-dimensional, as if to say with the swaying, articulate, punctulated, even elegantly explosive movement, "*This* is what celebration can be. And for us, today (may it last forever) this is what celebration *is*". I saw the costumes flare, the smiles gleam, the classical forms enacted before my eyes. And I saw in it all that this, too, was universal. Different cultures will glide and flow with slightly different accents, but it remained clear and true for me on that day: We all dance in the same language...

...And the River is part of the dance. The dancing goes on for an eternity, it seems, before and after the couple is wed. But there is a "during" that I could not miss for its apex-like character. It was the moment of their wedding, taken here as a verb, i.e., their *being wed*. Two lives become one in that moment, two stories align, and the potential for something new and true is afoot in a most tender and poignant way. So many layers here

are in place—not the layers of the youth spoken of above, those layers that obscure in their aiming to express and to find, but rather, layers that *add to the mystery* of this perennial love story now enacted in *this* couple in *this* place and time. The roaring of the river is a backdrop, and a symbol for those willing to see: Water gives life, and takes life. When tame, it is a wonderful asset, but when untamed and wild, though it is often sought to be braved, it can do great harm to its wayfarers. Sometimes the tides ebb low and quiet; at other times, they reign high and fearsome. Water cleanses, and it consumes. This is, of course, a metaphor for love itself. It is the rush of warning even through the tones of their sweetly-spoken "I do"...do they hear? That in the "I do" is a River of its own, a promise of all that has been considered here: A force, a power that heals and wounds, that builds up, creates, and destroys, that comforts, surprises, resolves, and confounds. This is the work of God according to the Scriptures across our creeds. God is love, after all. And love—as it is revealed here—is God. But like any revelation, this mystery of love is often not seen, not recognized for what it is; and only upon long-lived experience and its concomitant and subsequent reflection is its beautiful and awful chastisement embraced for the reality that it holds. Life costs everything. The two become one that a third may be born. We all wed in the same language...

...Until death do us part. That is what they say that day, do they not? They mean it, no doubt. Whether they have the tenacity and perseverance to see it through remains an open question, and there are as many who would see them fail as see them succeed. All go to the altar of God with the prize of an eternal vow in mind. Who lives it through all of life's predictable and virulently even more unpredictable trials is a mystery it seems not even God can know. But a love that moves mountains has been the prize of every land, and this land, *any* land is no different at all from the sovereign venerability of places and ages past who have lauded and prized the same. What is perennial has no beginning, no end, no expiry. Even when life expires. Which was the subject of my next gaze.

On the Ganges are places where bodies burn. Men stand in sober stare. Women weep. Children watch, quietly or cryingly. But it is solemn and still, even in the movement of it all. Here, death has not learned to be sterilized as it has in my land of birth. It is untamed and untrammeled, trickling into and touching everyday life, every day of life. It is embodied in Shiva's dance, in Kali's eyes. Not even the *avataras* are spared. It is a liturgy of its own, held sacrosanct in the somehow sacred way that it is couched in eminent *normalcy*. For what is or could be more normal than death? Than to know beyond all knowing that *this body will die*, that this story—as we know it here, as shaping and shaped by this plane of being—will come to a close, and indeed, with every breath, is already closing? Normal, yes. The *most* normal part of life save birth. And yet what is more *solemn* than this, than the closing of a human life and its opening to *new* life? It is the mystery of the "how", the "where", the "with Whom" that is life's carrier beyond death's borders, evincing death itself to be not life's

opposite, but birth's assured corollary. All of that is seen in the processional gravity of the funeral march. It is heard in the sob of the widow who cries for the loss of the embodied one with whom she has created life, and the even-worse wail of the mother who has just lost her daughter and will now see the body burn which was birthed from her own body's sacrifice and pain. It is sensed in the unassuaged questions that ring from the existential heart of the observers who have taken a moment or a lifetime to ask these questions, and who benefit from this bereaved time set apart to bask, to immerse in its transcendently grounding import. It is felt in the tears which flow in a space in which they are fully welcomed, even if never fully understood; and it is carried as a scene emblazoned on the mind for those returning home to their secular or spiritual diversions which seek to stave off the Reaper's quiet whisper: "You, too, someday...". With a sigh, let it be known: We all mourn in the same language...

...But what is mourned? Not life...no. Life is never mourned, even when it is suffered so. *Death*, life's seeming loss, is mourned, its mystery masquerading through countless shapes and forms, some sobering, some terrifying, some galvanizing, some deifying. My view's focus had been on those watching a body burn and be consigned to the ashes. It veered toward the "dust" which that body once was and could not *but* return to (cf. Gen. 3:19). But this new view, I saw, was cast not upon the one mourning. Rather, it was a view on the dying and on the dead.

In my life, I have been very close to the dying process and to the dying person. I have never been so humbled or so honored as when holding someone's hand facing his or her last days or last moments, or when I have consigned that body to the ground, hope springing high in bystander's hearts for a resurrected life somehow *beyond* all of "this". But here is a secret: the minister, the chaplain—we who have made death, as it were, our profession—all know ourselves to be something of a sham, a pretender. After all, what other trade in the world would tolerate a master or a mentor who had never lived *one day* in the ranks and trenches of what is being taught? Barring the precious few with stories in which they have seen the other side and come back to tell, we professionals of death and dying are experts without experience. And yet still, we are trusted. We have walked closely upon the peripheries of death, as close as life would let us. We have read, studied, tried to cultivate the virtues and qualities that allow us this privileged place in *this* precious life's most precious moment, its most crucial movement: that most solemn and prizedly unique transition called "death". Time and again we have been present when the undeniable happens, though it is utterly invisible: a *spirit* leaves its dwelling, and the room *palpably* changes in that instant. It is lighter, yet even more somber, while silence alone is left as the sole truth-tale bearer despite the cries of tearful mourning which rise up from its base. Nothing in the world is like this. *Nothing*.

Standing on the shore, watching another body burn, I see the irreducible reduction: For *all* of us, it comes down to *this*. We may choose cremation or burial or being scattered at sea. We may choose a *Requiem* Mass, a "celebration of life", a nobly quiet almost non-event of final commendation, or no commemoration at all. But those are tertiary details issuing from a fact that is sure: I will die. And the body in front of me—fast becoming no-body at all—which once housed a person and a personal story that had never before been and which never shall be again in this world, reminds me of all of this as the embers give rise to the chimera of smoke-like atmospheric shimmering, a kind of corporeal incense being raised to the Creator for the last time as the final and only offering that this uniquely-lived life has left to give. A stillness like no other reigns supreme, the teaching language of *Yama,* the god of death, for those who will listen to its sheerest silences. We all die in the same language.

Full Circle

On these banks, I have seen children play in their pretending; teens court in their pretending *not* to; dancers dance as if there were no sorrow...at least, until tomorrow; couples wed as if their love would be the one to at last lay every sorrow to rest; mourners face beyond denial what life promises as its earthly end; and the dead inherit life's only undeniably promised fruit. That would seem to be all...but, no. It is not all. There is one more.

Sadhu, sadhu: Who are you? Where have you been? Where are you going? What and *how* do you, the sagacious one, see? What is the wisdom behind your eyes that takes all of this in, yet remains unperturbable amidst so much perturbation, unmovable in the midst of such constantly moving change? What is your secret? And if such a secret exists, would you reveal it to me, to *all* of us who seek it in you, through you?

But, he does not speak. And I see therein the secret I seek. This *is* an answer, for he *does* hear, but he has learned long ago that words awash with concepts merely wash away. A disciple of *Dakshimamurti*—the silent sage who teaches in a way no words can touch—he now assumes that role for me. He looks like nothing, sounds like nothing, lives as if nothing seemed real but for The One Whose life he shows forth and embodies. He has seen the little ones, and he smiles. He has seen the young ones, and he smiles. He has seen the dancers, the brides, the mourning, the dying, and he knows still smilingly that only one perspective—that of the Beyond—can ground him soundly on these shores in this world of the befuddling "here", placing him at the still and placid eye of the tempest of the "now". He has chosen "the one thing necessary" (Lk. 10:42), the one and only appropriate response to what he has seen and to who he knows himself and the world and God to be. He has chosen, in a word, *prayer*, but not as commonly understood: not as transactional shopkeeping, a give and take, a pretty-please; not as something to "do", nor even a touchpoint, no matter how venerable,

between heaven and earth, between I and Thou. He has chosen not to pray, but to *become prayer* as *resonant, embodied <u>being</u>* itself; *Presence*; *<u>One</u>*, without a second. Perspective—Truth's understanding, love's dwelling—is ever his, because prayer is ever his, ever *him*. The "I am" of his breath is the "I Am" of the God's depth, and the difference between the two is...*not*. He has come full circle, and he brings me there, too. Standing, watching, waiting, being, there is only one response to all of this, all that he has left as he ponders prayerfully the laughing, crying, dancing, mourning, burning: "Why not become *all fire*?"[4] And for all of us, he has, keeping vigil as life's fire itself. The old man, born out of time, teaches me that for all of prayer's diverse forms and means, all of its stated hopes, its conventional, contemplative, charismatic, flaring and flurried expressions, its infinitely sobering and striking aims, we all pray in the same language.

Mother Ganga, you have taught me well, taught me lessons as plain as day, lessons which save me from an endless night, but which because of their invisible weave into the web of life are the first to be forgotten. Your rush is a remembering, and so in my heart, to you, I shall be ever returning. From flirtation to cremation, your holy riverbed has seen it all, and announces to us the lesson at your maternal heart's core: The child's play is my play, the youth's saunter, mine. The dancer's measured ecstasy, the couple's promised destiny, the mourner's staid agony, the dead's burning effigy, the monk's timeless take on life's menagerie... All of it is mine, for God—Whose passion play all of this forever is—is forever mine.[5] And as all that belongs to the Father belongs to the Son (cf. Jn. 16:15), so all that is the lover's hope is already the beloved's possession.

We all play in the same language, court in the same language, dance in the same language, wed in the same language, weep in the same language, die in the same language, pray in the same language...which seems utterly impossible if not for the fact that it cannot *but* be so, the lived articulation of a universal love made flesh, made felt, made flourishing. This plethora of difference-in-oneness cries, "We all *live* in the same language". It is the language of life itself.

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सहज बोध:
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[4] ABBA JOSEPH, Saying number seven, in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. B. Ward, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo 1975, 103.

[5] "Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth. Mine are the nations, the just are mine, and mine the sinners. The angels are mine, and the Mother of God, and *all things are mine*; and *God himself is mine* and for me, because *Christ is mine* and all for me...What do you ask, then, and seek, my soul? *Yours is all of this*, and all is for you." ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS, *Sayings of Light and Love*, #27, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross: Revised Edition*, trans. eng. K. Kavanaugh – O. Rodriguez, revisions and introductions K. Kavanaugh, ICS Publications, Washington D.C. 1991, 87 – 88 (emphasis added).