



# Search for Nothing: The Life of John on the Cross

*Richard P. Hardy*

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## **Search for Nothing: The Life of John on the Cross** Richard P. Hardy

Richard P. Hardy is professor of spirituality at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, and the author of numerous articles and books, including *Search for Nothing: The Life of John of the Cross*. The demands and the apparent harshness of the path which St. John of the Cross proposes simply overwhelm most of those who try to read his *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and or his *Dark Night*. If they seek to calm their fears and overcome their hesitation by consulting studies on St. John, they find that scholars have often interpreted him in a rather ethereal, disembodied fashion. Their anxiety about his relevance to the contemporary world is increased. However, it is my contention that when we really understand St. John of the Cross's view of the Christian life, we discover a very human and indeed embodied path to God. In the first part of this study, I wish to examine John's affirmation that in the union of love here in this life, human beings are so transformed that they become one with the will of God and actually love here and now with the love of God. In the second part, I wish to answer the question: "How does St. John of the Cross understand and present God's love for people, the world, indeed the whole of creation?" My thesis is that the fear many in the Christian churches have of body, passion and love has, in fact, led them to misinterpret St. John's view of love. They have made it something ethereal, "purely spiritual," and therefore disembodied or disincarnated. In fact, though, for St. John such a love is passionate, bodily and incarnated. I believe that seeing him in this way will enable us in the twentieth century to break through to a much more authentic Christian spirituality and indeed, a much more truthful presentation of St. John of the Cross's own teaching and hopes.

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