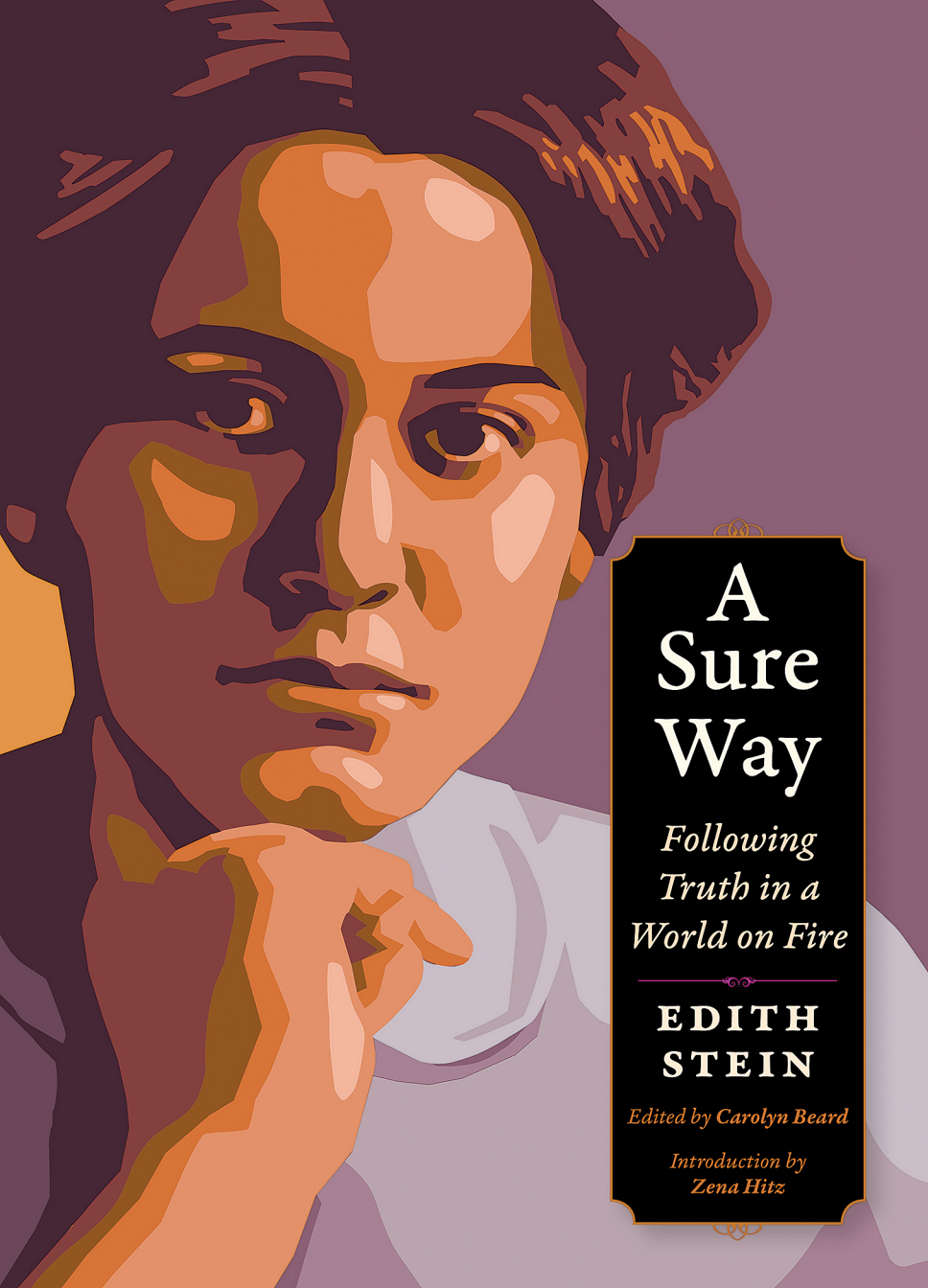
A Sure Way
Following Truth in a World on Fire
EDITH STEIN
Edited by Carolyn Beard
Introduction by Zena Hitz

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Who Was Edith Stein?

Carolyn Beard

"The world is in flames. The conflagration can also reach our house. But high above all flames towers the cross. The flames cannot consume the cross.

"The world is in flames. Are you impelled to put them out?

"The eyes of the Crucified look down on you – asking, probing. What will you answer him?"

EDITH STEIN SAW the world in flames. A German-Jewish philosopher turned Catholic monastic, she witnessed the rise of the Nazi regime and experienced the oppression of Jews and other minorities under the totalitarian state. In April 1933, the same month that a Nazi decree forced her out of her teaching post, Stein wrote to Pope Pius XI, urging him to protest Nazi violence against Jews. Throughout the mid to late 1930s, cloistered in a Carmelite monastery in Cologne,

Germany, Stein wrote spiritual missives on finding light in dark times. And in April 1941, having been smuggled into the Netherlands and hiding behind cloister walls, Stein reflected on the meaning of the cross: "The world is in flames. Are you impelled to put them out?"

Because of her Jewish heritage, Edith Stein was ultimately arrested and deported. She was killed at Auschwitz on August 9, 1942. Following her death at the Nazi extermination camp and her subsequent beatification and canonization in the Roman Catholic Church, Stein is remembered as a "Holocaust martyr" and saint. Stein's wartime writings, some of which are included in this book, are a compelling testament to what it means to live a life of faith in dark times. Written from Stein's unique vantage as a Jewish-Christian monastic, these writings are also cutting reprimands of Christians who failed to advocate for or protect their Jewish brothers and sisters in their time of need.

Yet Edith Stein's life and legacy contain so much more than her victimhood or the circumstances of her death. During her lifetime, Stein witnessed multiple turning points in twentieth-century Europe: she saw the golden age of the Prussian monarchy, the battlefield tragedies of World War I, the hope and rapid decline of the interwar period, the terror of the Nazi regime, and the horror

of the Holocaust. She wore many different hats during her life: she was Jewish and Catholic, philosopher and mystic, daughter and sister, student and colleague, teacher and translator, poet and public speaker, nurse and suffragette. Stein's many identities point to the complexity of a life spent in pursuit of truth.

EDITH STEIN WAS BORN on October 12, 1891, in Breslau, Germany, now Wrocław, Poland. She was raised in an observant but assimilated upper-middle-class Jewish family. The youngest of eleven children, seven of whom survived to adulthood, Stein had an auspicious birthday – she was born on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish year. Stein experienced loss from an early age: when she was eighteen months old, her father died of a heat stroke while on a business trip, leaving his wife, Auguste, in charge of the household and family business. In the summers, the Stein family would vacation in their ancestral hometown in Upper Silesia and visit the Jewish cemetery where Stein's ancestors and four of her siblings who had died in infancy were interred.

As a child, Stein was small and pale with a lively and mercurial temperament, known for being obstinate, impertinent, and precocious. But even from a young age, she felt the depth of her inner life, what she called

her "hidden world." She was acutely sensitive to the suffering of others. "I would lie awake for hours at night, and, in the dark, horror would press in upon me from every corner." What for her was a deep, formative experience of "hidden suffering," her relatives wrote off as "nerves." While Stein's inner world was brightened by entering school, she continued to develop a deep sense of her own interiority as she grew up.

As the family matriarch and breadwinner, Auguste Stein insisted that her daughters receive a rigorous education, wanting to provide them with opportunities she had been denied. When Edith's sister Rose, just a year and a half her senior, began school, Edith insisted on joining her. After an older sister advocated her case to school administrators, Edith was permitted to enroll in school a year early. Catching up to her classmates, Stein demonstrated an early aptitude for learning, with particular interests in history and German. She regularly placed at the top of her class, and she felt most "at home" when she was at school.

Throughout her school days, by all accounts, Stein retained her lively spirit and vivid imagination, and during this time, she developed a proclivity for daydreaming. Already as a child, she felt a longing for something greater. "I always foresaw a brilliant future

for myself. I dreamed about happiness and fame, for I was convinced that I was destined for something great and that I did not belong at all in the narrow, bourgeois circumstances to which I had been born."

Already as a child, Stein became "fed up" with school. When one of her older sisters in Hamburg had a baby, Stein took the opportunity to assist the new mother as an opening to take a break from school. What was supposed to be a six-week visit turned into a ten-month stay. It was during this period, exposed to a new world and literature "not fit" for a young girl, that Stein lost her childhood faith. At the age of fourteen, she stopped praying and became an atheist.

Almost a year later, when Stein returned to Breslau, she knew that she wanted to continue her studies. Because of her time away, she was behind and had to engage in months of rigorous work to qualify for secondary school. After earning her spot, she performed well academically and was well regarded by her classmates. For Stein's graduation, her classmates wrote a poem in honor of the budding suffragette:

Let woman equal be with man,
So loud this suffragette avers,
In days to come we surely can
See that a cabinet post is hers.

At a time when women were rarely allowed to pursue higher education, Stein passed her matriculation exam in March 1911 and enrolled at the University of Breslau, becoming one of only a few female students in the philosophy department. Though originally planning to pursue a degree in psychology, she developed a deep interest in philosophy when she read Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. In 1913, she transferred to the University of Göttingen to study under Husserl, the father of modern phenomenology. As a member of the Göttingen circle, a network of students and scholars studying Husserlian phenomenology, Stein found a community of scholars and colleagues who would become her lifelong friends and collaborators.

Stein's studies were cut short with the start of World War I. Hoping to contribute to the war effort and longing to be a part of something greater than herself, she returned to Breslau and volunteered with the Red Cross. For six months, she provided palliative care to soldiers while serving as a nurse in a field hospital, offering support to the wounded from all sides of the conflict. Through this work, Stein witnessed the horrific consequences of modern warfare. After her service, she returned to study under Husserl, now at the University of Freiburg. In 1916, she earned her doctorate

in philosophy with a dissertation on empathy, and went on to serve as Husserl's research assistant, compiling and expanding his chaotic notes. Though Stein wanted to build a career as an academic, her gender barred her from access, since she was unable to find a faculty willing to accept her for the next stage of her education. After she petitioned her cause, Prussian authorities formally banned gender discrimination in the academic advancement process.

It was in this season of significant social and personal change that Stein had a conversion experience. Though raised in an observant Jewish family, she had renounced her childhood faith as a teenager. While a young adult away at university, Stein occasionally observed Jewish holidays with the gift packages her mother mailed from home. Even after her conversion to Christianity, she maintained a positive relationship with Judaism as her heritage and cultural inheritance, particularly expressing deep compassion for and solidarity with Jewish communities.

Stein does not offer a single, cohesive narrative of her conversion to Christianity. Instead, across her personal writings, she leaves a collection of short, illustrative impressions that reflect her gradual movement toward faith. She recalls a moment in 1911 when, while attending

the University of Breslau, she and a friend visited one of Breslau's historic churches adjoining the university during a free period. When she moved to the University of Göttingen, Stein became colleagues and friends with a wide circle of Protestant and Catholic philosophers.

In July 1916, Stein took a trip to visit a fellow philosopher in Frankfurt am Main. She was deeply moved by the Christian funereal iconography she saw at a museum. And when she visited the city's cathedral, she witnessed a woman set down her market basket to kneel and pray. Reflecting on the impact this moment had on her faith journey more than a decade later, Stein wrote that it was as if the woman was engaged in an "intimate conversation" with God. Stein's autobiography makes clear what a deep impression this chance encounter left on her.

In 1921, when visiting friends and fellow philosophers Theodor and Hedwig Conrad Martius, Stein read the biography of mystic Saint Teresa of Ávila and felt that she had finally encountered the truth. On January 1, 1922, Stein was baptized into the Catholic Church. Though she initially wanted to enter monastic life, spiritual advisors encouraged her to serve God and the church in an academic career. She spent the following decade working as a teacher, writer, and lecturer,

training educators, writing essays, and delivering lectures on Catholic and women's education. In reflections after her death, Stein's former students recalled her as an exacting but generous instructor who helped them develop a lifelong love for learning.

With the Nazis' rise to power in 1933 and the prohibition against the employment of Jews in civil service that April, Stein lost her teaching position at a public university. She wrote a letter to Pope Pius XI, appealing to their shared Christian values and calling on Rome to protest the mounting violence against Jews. Stein's letter was received by the Vatican but was not answered. The letter attests to her complicated Jewish-Christian identity and passionate empathy for the suffering of others; it is also part of a larger body of evidence that points to the failure of Christian institutions to protect Jewish people during the Nazi period.

Having been removed from her professional employment, Stein's path was cleared to enter monastic life. For the last decade of her life, she lived behind cloister walls. In 1935, Stein professed her monastic vows at the Carmelite monastery in Cologne, where she took on the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, a name that points to her intellectual and spiritual relationships with Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross. Because of the economic

crisis in Germany, when Stein took her final vows, she wore a wedding dress borrowed from her university friend and fellow philosopher Hedwig Conrad Martius. Though not employed as an academic, Stein continued to be an incredibly prolific writer in the monastery, penning essays, translations, liturgical texts, and poetry.

As conditions for Jews in Germany worsened, Stein's safety in Cologne became precarious. Following the widespread violence against Jews across Germany the night of November 9, 1938, a pogrom that came to be known as Kristallnacht, Stein feared that her presence would jeopardize the safety of the monastery and her religious sisters. On New Year's Eve 1938, she was smuggled over the German border and taken into hiding in a Carmelite monastery in the Netherlands. Ultimately, Edith Stein was arrested in the Netherlands on August 2, 1942. She was moved between Nazi transit camps and finally transported to Auschwitz, where she died in the gas chamber on August 9.

Because of her murder in the Holocaust, Edith Stein is remembered as one among the millions of victims of the Nazi regime. But her life and writings attest to much more: her pursuit of truth, her journey to faith, and her resistance to a totalitarian regime. The following pages contain a sampling of Stein's most intimate writings.

While these texts range from the philosophical to the poetic, they each invite us to walk in faith with her: to seek the truth, to deepen our inner lives, and to draw closer to God.

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Reading Edith Stein Today

Zena Hitz

WHY READ EDITH STEIN TODAY? She herself tells us why, in the following pages:

> What is, then, the great sickness of our time and people? There is an inner disunion, a complete deficiency of set convictions and strong principles, an aimless drifting. Therefore, the great mass of humanity seeks an anesthetic in ever new, ever more refined delights. Those who wish to maintain a sober level of life, in order to protect themselves from contemporary turmoil, frequently annihilate this level by one-sided professional work; but even they cannot do anything to escape the turmoil.

We members of "the great mass of humanity" – or at least a narrower group, the global middle class and those who aspire to it – find ourselves caught between addiction to pleasure and addiction to work. What clear goal

organizes our lives? We live by media-driven trends and technological fads. We drift in the consumer markets. We are borne along on streams of public opinion whose basis in reality is questionable. Our attention is bought and sold by large companies unconcerned about our well-being or our contact with truth.

Why is the drifting painful? In part, because our own happiness depends on deep truths; unless those truths find us and we them, neither "refined delights" nor work can console us. Our desire for goodness and for real community is muffled and suppressed. Our modern media display in detail war, famine, and large-scale displacement. Yet our love and pity meet the obstacle of our own powerlessness. Our hearts long for a way of life that is steadfast and strong as well as ingenious and effective in the face of suffering.

Our governments are meant to effect the work of repair, but instead of a humane order we find a struggle between raw loci of power, none of which has any right to prevail over another. At one time, an appeal to ethical principles might have been offered as a fig leaf over naked self-interest. Now the mask has fallen away. The turmoil of these struggles for power is not an abstraction but bears real suffering in its wake: the suffering of

those whose paths to a decent life have been erased, the suffering of the prisoner, the suffering of the migrant. Without strong common principles to cling to, we hide from the pain by pursuing the "refined delights" of artisanal cocktails or fine dining, mountain climbing or elaborately designed games.

Alternately – and here Stein has cut straight to my own heart – we bury ourselves in work, hoping there to find the seriousness that has been set adrift by the chaos of social life. Yet work does not give us strength nor saving grace. Our strength can come only from God. Stein continues:

> Only whole human beings . . . are immune to the contemporary sickness: such beings are steadfast on eternal first principles, unperturbed in their views and in their actions by the changing modes of thoughts, follies, and depravities surrounding them. Every such individual is like a pillar to which many can fasten themselves, thereby attaining a firm footing.

Those anchored in Jesus Christ can provide a hitching post for others. Eternal first principles, as Stein puts it, are our only hope.

I FIRST ENCOUNTERED Edith Stein, or Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, while preparing for baptism – along with the rites of confirmation and first communion – in the Roman Catholic Church. I was thirty-two. It is traditional to receive one's confirmation with an appeal to a patron saint. I struggled to choose one. My godmother, a math professor, found Saint Teresa Benedicta and passed on some of her writings. My godmother's thinking was obvious: I, like Stein, was a philosophy professor with a Jewish background.

I found Stein's writing formidable and difficult to like. Much of it bears the stamp of the German academic world that educated her. The voice is passive, the language abstract, the aim scientific. Even her spiritual writing, while profound, is sometimes austere and impersonal. She keeps her own heart hidden. But stay with her long enough, and you will be rewarded.

By the obstacles she presents to her readers, Stein resembles the great Carmelite sister Thérèse of Lisieux, who was canonized during Stein's lifetime. Thérèse's writing bears the stamp of a French bourgeoisie soaked in sentimentality. Its profound truths lie behind a veil of saccharine sweetness. Yet Thérèse is a fearsome

saint; once her teaching is understood, it can inspire something like terror and awe at the holy strength and brilliance of this young woman. The theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar compares the fierceness of Thérèse to that of Saint Paul: two saints with whom a personal encounter might inspire holy dread.

Stein, too, is a saint who can inspire such holy dread. Her natural strength and accomplishments contribute to the effect. Stein's mother was a powerful business owner; Stein herself was a suffragette and a successful academic at a time when women were generally excluded from those halls. Her embrace of humility, first as a Catholic, and then as a nun, must have been hard won. Her divine strength, given by grace, hides behind her formidable natural character. Once glimpsed, however, the strength of the nun and martyr dwarfs the merely human strength on which she relied in her early life, and whose vestige remains on her writing. The philosophy student who could not find employment because of her gender needed fierce human strength; the woman who chose to enter the Carmelites and later faced the death camps could only have done so by divine grace.

As I have spent more time with Stein's writing, I have found that what appears cold and impersonal at first turns out to be passionately universal. Under the veil of

academic and monastic austerity is a heart burning with love and tenderness. Stein's philosophical bent gives her spiritual writing a powerful objectivity and breadth of scope that a personal memoir might miss.

Stein's last work, *The Science of the Cross*, excerpted here, was left open on her desk when she was arrested and taken to Auschwitz. Its writing is contemporary with the memoir of Etty Hillesum, a young Dutch Jewish woman who met the same fate. From Hillesum we can learn what it might feel like, from one day to the next, to face such a death and choose to offer it to God. By a strange coincidence, Hillesum was a volunteer at the transit camp of Westerbork when the transport carrying Stein passed through. As far as we know the two never met. Hillesum's letters describe the effect the transport of Catholic priests and religious had on those in the camp. Another witness reported seeing Stein at the camp, consoling parents and helping to look after their small children.

By contrast to Hillesum, we learn little of Stein's experiences from her writing. In her last writings, she reaches into the teachings of the great Carmelite reformer Saint John of the Cross. The "science of the cross" – a deceptively academic-sounding phrase – turns out to be a living seed, not a "science" or a body of true

statements in the least. The cross is not a mere image or historical event. It is alive, growing and working through the hearts of the faithful:

> [The cross is] a living, real, and effective truth. It is buried in the soul like a seed that takes root there, making a distinct impression on the soul, determining what it does and omits, and by shining outwardly is recognized in this very doing and omitting.

Here again, the philosophical language veils a concrete reality. Christians walk in the shadow of the cross; Christian saints display this cross in their lives. Consider Stein's own "doing and omitting." When fired from her post in 1933 for her Jewish background, she did not emigrate to a lucrative teaching career in the United States. Instead, she became a Carmelite nun in the country that was seeking to bind and corner her. She was not reckless; when her community and her life were threatened, she emigrated to a convent in the Netherlands. When the Gestapo pursued her even there, she chose to suffer and die along with many thousands of others.

The shape of Stein's life is cruciform, and she tells us why: the seed of grace planted in her heart grew and gave her the capacity to sacrifice as Christ did.

AS THE WORLD AROUND HER turned from brutality and repression into the flames of war, Stein posed a question to her Carmelite sisters – and perhaps to her own suffragette heart that sought strength in action: "The world is in flames. Are you impelled to put them out?"

Our own age is an age of problem-solving. We seek data-driven solutions to famine, war, illness, and corruption. As I write, these solutions are being unveiled as spectacular failures. War has spread rather than contracted. Famine and disease are on the upswing. Governments abandon the semblance of principle and do as they please against whatever enemies they choose to pursue.

Addressing her sisters in the convent days after the German and Soviet invasions of Poland, Stein appeals to the natural desire to aid the wounded and console the dying. Yet, Stein says, the faithful observance of their vows, the humble life of prayer and service in community, is more than sufficient. By union with Christ, "you are omnipresent as he is. . . . You can be at all fronts, wherever there is grief, in the power of the cross."

Writing of the value of a woman in ordinary life, she points out that "everywhere she meets with a human being, she will find opportunity to sustain, to counsel, to

help." She sees in the most ordinary circumstances of life a canvas on which the cross of Christ can bring salvation. Our role is not dramatic on its face. The drama is the divine action. We need only to pray, serve, and suffer with fidelity.

We can read Stein's words and imagine what she does not describe for us: the crucifixion of her own ambition. But her advice is also perceptive and prudent. Our role is not to govern the world, but to love one another. Such love is humble, small, and often invisible, and yet the health of the world hinges on it.

EDITH STEIN BEGAN her adulthood as a philosopher, a seeker of wisdom and understanding. Edmund Husserl, her teacher, sought to steer philosophy back to the encounter with truth that modern scientific thought had obscured. Such intellectual work must seem a long way from God, and certainly the furthest thing from the humble acts of service Stein was seen doing up until her last moments.

Stein the philosopher saw the simple Christian argument as if it were addressed to her personally: philosophy strives for wisdom, but we cannot achieve wisdom by our own powers. Christ is wisdom, as Paul preaches in the First Letter to the Corinthians. Faith in

Christ is offered to everyone, and in fact seems to come more readily to the humble than to philosophy professors. The perfect fulfillment of the search for wisdom is the sight of God in the afterlife.

Stein leaves it to us to draw out the scandal presented by her own life. She began her pursuit of wisdom as a favored student of Edmund Husserl, arguably the greatest philosopher of his time. She concluded it after spending some years behind the walls of a convent, following a simple rule of work and prayer, and then submitting to the grotesque humiliation of industrial-scale murder.

Wisdom is not to be found in the halls of power nor in the halls of scholarship. It is found, by the reception of grace, in the depths of the human heart. There, through the action of the living and almighty cross of Christ, we find the scope for action we have always longed for. We walk in the footsteps of an executed criminal. Through that execution, sufficient light and grace have been poured out to illuminate all the darkness of our world. Because Christ died for us, the care of a small child can be a wedge of grace sufficient to smash the structure of mass murder.

As the long Carmelite tradition famously teaches, the light of Christ sometimes comes to us in the form

of thick darkness. God lovingly weans us from our dependence on dramatic displays of divine power and on palpable consolations. He leads us on to greater and greater leaps into the dark. Christ tells doubting Thomas that those who do not see yet still believe are more blessed. The invitation for the Christian is not to turn away from darkness but to face it, with courage and with a heart overflowing with love.

I grew up in the 1970s, when the memory of the Holocaust was still fresh. My grandmother fled Europe with her family in the 1930s. Her own grandmother was murdered in Poland with other members of our family. The death camps were, for my generation, the image of the pinnacle of human evil. The spirit under which we were taught about the camps and their ruling regime was one of humility: born in different circumstances, we might have been the perpetrators. I could never have imagined, in my pre-Christian life, that someone might have been capable of facing down the death camps. Who could look at them squarely and say to God, "Not my will, but thine be done"?

It is easy to see why I would have found this hard to imagine, as strength of this kind is not humanly given. It is, rather, the culmination of a life lived in open and willing dependence on grace. As we face the darkness

of our own age, there is no more fitting companion than the philosophy-professor-turned-nun who looked the deepest evil in the eye and leaped, trusting all to the God who made the heavens and the earth.

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PART I

Ways to Know God

I

Approaching God

God often seems absent, but Edith Stein reminds us that God always desires to be in relationship with us. In her posthumously published 1941 essay "Ways to Know God," from which the following two readings are excerpted, Stein considers the different ways people approach God, whether through nature, scripture, faith, or a direct experience of God's presence.

GOD WISHES to let himself be found by those who seek him. Hence, he wishes first to be sought. . . . Faith is already a finding and corresponds to God letting himself be found, not only in the sense that through his word God says something about himself but that through his word he also lets himself be found.

Faith is a gift that must be accepted. In faith, divine and human freedom meet. But it is a gift that bids us ask for more. As dark and lacking the evidence of insight, faith awakens a yearning for unveiled clarity; as mediated encounter, it awakens a longing for an immediate

encounter with God. Indeed, the very content of faith awakens desire by promising the beatific vision.

THE PERSON WHO already possesses an experiential knowledge of God will have the most proper understanding. . . . However, a certain understanding is also quite possible on the basis of faith and even of the natural knowledge of God. The person who knows and loves God from and in his living faith will be eager to come to know him from ever-changing perspectives and in new features, and again and again he will turn to the Holy Scriptures that make this possible. . . .

When a person lacking faith reads Holy Scripture – for example, for the purposes of philology or religious studies – he does not come to know God. He only learns how God is conceived in the Bible and by those who accept the Bible in faith, unless faith is awakened in him by what he reads, but in this case there is a transition from one outlook to another.

Even within faith there are various ways of understanding and coming to know. The person reading Holy Scripture with faith accepts whatever he reads "in faith," that is, as revealed truth. But this on no account means that he grasps everything in a *living way* that affects his *soul*. His reading may be largely an empty grasp of

the meaning of the words, without any effect on his life experience. We feel the difference clearly when all of a sudden we see a passage we have often read "in a new light" – in a light that shows us something about God that was hidden from us before or . . . in our own soul. We can also be affected in a quite personal way by a divine demand that we did not realize before. Or a new relationship among truths of faith that until now were unconnected may strike us.

All this is possible "in the light of faith." Our knowledge of God is enriched by it, our relationship with God deepened and better ordered; yet with faith we still do not stand before God himself. But this, too, may happen: a word of Scripture may so touch me in my innermost being that in this word I feel God himself speaking to me and sense his presence. The book and the sacred writer, or the preacher that I was just hearing, have vanished – *God himself is speaking*, and he is speaking to *me*. At the time, the ground of faith is not exactly left behind, but for the moment I am raised above it to the experiential knowledge of God.

This is, at bottom, the goal of all theology: to clear the way to God himself. . . . Theology addresses a select group, and for its adherents – that is, for those who have already experienced a certain enlightenment and hence

are striving for holiness – it would do more than instruct them in the content of faith. By unveiling a suprasensible world for them through its images, it would teach them to free themselves more and more from the world of the senses and, in the end, it will bring them to the point where they no longer need sensible images at all. It will "lead them by the hand" first from the sensible to the spiritual and suprasensible, and finally to the highest summit, to oneness with the One. This last stage, of course, lies not within the power of symbolic theology, but is God's affair; theology can but lead in the right direction.

Now, when we call experiential knowledge a "fulfillment" of faith, the term includes the notion that faith aims at the same thing that comes as given in experiential knowledge. This is a general feature of the relation of "intention" and "fulfillment." When I see something with my own eyes that I only heard about before – for example, a famous work of art or a beautiful city – the reality I now have before me already existed in my mental world. It had reached me in a certain way through what I was told or read, and I was already inwardly stirred by it.

And this is all the more true of faith. Holy Scripture counts as "God's Word" for us because therein he draws

near to us, makes himself known to us, makes his demands upon us. Of course, the word is spoken "in his name" only so long as I take it purely on faith. God is not sensibly present, nor does he speak in his own person. And yet I do come into contact with him through this transmitted word, and by it I am inwardly moved. And this property of faith of going beyond itself – Saint Thomas calls faith "the beginning of eternal life in us" – is just what brings us to "know God again," to recognize him when he suddenly makes his presence felt or even when he shows himself visibly, and it is what enables us to understand, even without any experiential knowledge of our own, what others speak of from their experience of God.

What we have said here of faith may apply in a certain way to the natural knowledge of God. A person who has grown up without religious instruction but is sensitive to the traces of God in nature, in his own heart, and in human life may perceive his failings as "sins" and a loss he suffers as "God's punishment." He can appreciate it when God is said to flare up in anger and to be a consuming fire. However imperfect and vague his natural knowledge of God may be, however much it needs to be corrected and enriched, clarified and explained by faith, it already points to what will become reality in

the experiential knowledge of God. Also, in the natural knowledge of God, a certain encounter with God takes place that enables him to "know him again, to recognize him," should God ever stand before him.