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## BIOGRAPHIA

WILSON, CHRISTOPHER, (ed.), *The Heirs of St. Teresa of Ávila: Defenders and Disseminators of the Founding Mother's Legacy*. Carmelite Studies, Volume IX. 2006, pp. xvii, 140. ICS Publications, Institute of Carmelite Studies, Washington D.C., U.S.A. ([www.icspublications.org](http://www.icspublications.org)) & Institutum Carmelitanum (<http://carmelites.info/institutum/>), Roma, Italia. ISBN 0-935216-40-5. \$12.95.

This book, which is ninth in a series of 'Carmelite Studies' from the Institute of Carmelite Studies (ICS) in Washington D.C., is the fruit of a symposium held at Georgetown University in 2004. Seven essays by different contributors bring us closer to Teresa of Jesus (of Avila) by engaging with various important collaborators, or assessing her impact on those who admired her, both contemporaries and later followers. Incidentally, some of these studies show Teresa in action in areas of special interest today.

The first essay deals with Maria de San Jose Salazar, described as "Teresa's difficult daughter". Alison Weber's account of Maria shows us Teresa as educator, with the delicate task of forming someone for the kind of leadership in keeping with her ideals for her reform. Weber notes some frustration as Maria was not so pliable as Teresa would have wished. Nevertheless, by abiding by her own principles of gentleness and patience, Teresa influenced Maria till in her turn she endorsed the *Madre's* teachings in her own.

Mujica's essay on Teresa's vow of obedience to Father Gracian shows a clear appreciation of the balance between freedom of conscience and the spiritual freedom of being in a relationship of dependence based on trust, far removed from subservience. The flexibility of this relationship allows for Teresa to exercise the role of formator, again trying to develop the gifts of her superior/disciple to meet the needs of the growth of her reform. She was, by necessity, adept at getting the best out of her not-quite-ideal collaborators.

Ana of Saint-Augustine, the subject of the next essay, shows a kind of family likeness to her spiritual Mother, as though the graces and rare experiences of the Discalced founder are to be expected in her daughters. This expectation is an indicator of what different generations prize as norms of "holiness". Those favoured in the seventeenth century differ, perhaps, from those that would be favoured today.

The account of Ana of Saint-Bartholomew, which follows next, has special interest as a case history of the difficulties of “inculturation” when transposing a well-established way of religious life from one culture to another: in this case from Spain to France. Kavanaugh portrays sympathetically the dilemma of the docile Ana trapped, as it were, in obedience to one whom she felt did not understand the work of St. Teresa as well as she did herself, a contrast between the humble Spanish Carmelite and the sophisticated French Oratorian. (Perhaps it might be permitted to add that Berulle’s participation in the early days of Carmel in France take on a more humane and benevolent tone when told from the perspective of some of the early French Carmelites – a point which might deserve scholarly discussion at a future date).

The fifth essay shows Ana of Saint-Bartholomew again, this time in contradistinction to Ana of Jesus: two favoured daughters of Teresa, who perpetuated her heritage in complementary ways. In this essay the volume’s editor, Christopher Wilson, bases his approach on the artistic representations in the Netherlands of these two great Carmelites. One picks up, in a discreet way, that there were strong differences of approach between these two women, which is reflected by the way contemporary art attributes to each of them key differences aimed at validating the claims of each to a primacy of witness to Teresa. There is surely much to learn from these differences between notable and exemplary Carmelites: relationships, even between the undoubtedly holy, could also have a very human touch.

The sixth essay by Jodi Bilinkoff on “Those touched by Teresa” might perhaps be trying to survey too wide a field for any meaningful appraisal, though it certainly indicates the far-reaching effects of Teresa’s writings fairly rapidly after her death. Bilinkoff singles out pious women and their spiritual guides, but it is well known that the circle of readers was far wider.

The final essay, comparing devotion to St. Joseph in the spirituality of St. Teresa and St. Francis de Sales, might at first sight also appear as a rather arbitrary comparison, until one remembers the great importance of the support that the Bishop of Geneva gave to the Teresian Reform, and his involvement in the introduction of the Order into France. He obviously felt a deep spiritual affinity to the Spanish Carmelite, and the place St. Joseph held in each of their lives underwent a slow maturation in both cases, making it deep, tender, and totally trustful.

Taken as a whole, the essays in this series shed light on many aspects of the rich Teresian heritage. They possibly speak more fully to those who are already familiar with it, but it is to be hoped they will also encourage newer readers to broaden their approach, alerting them to nuances and facets in the varied tapestry of this truly great woman.

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