Dark Night Book II, Chapter 10

*Explains this purgation fully by **a comparison** [fire and wood].*

1. FOR the **greater clearness** of what has been said, and of what has still to be said, it is well to observe at this point that this purgative and loving knowledge or Divine light whereof we here speak acts upon the soul which it is purging and preparing for **perfect union** with it in **the same way** as fire acts upon a log of wood in order to transform it into itself;
for **material fire**, acting upon wood,
first of all begins to dry it, by driving out its moisture and causing it to shed the water which it contains within itself.
Then it begins to make it black, dark and unsightly, and even to give forth a bad odour, and, as it dries it **little by little**, it brings out and drives away all the dark and unsightly accidents which are contrary to the nature of fire.
And, finally, it begins to kindle it externally and give it heat, and at last **transforms it into itself** and makes it **as beautiful as fire**. In this respect, the wood has **neither passivity nor activity** of its own, save for its weight, which is greater, and its substance, which is denser, than that of fire, for **it has in itself the properties and activities of fire**.
Thus it is dry and it dries;
it is hot and heats;
it is bright and gives brightness;
and it is much less heavy than before.
All these properties and effects are caused in it by the fire.

2. **In this same way** we have to philosophize with respect to this Divine fire of contemplative love, which, before it **unites and transforms** the soul in itself,
first purges it of all its contrary accidents. It drives out its unsightliness, and **makes it black and dark**, so that **it seems worse than before** and more unsightly and abominable than it was wont to be. For this Divine purgation is **removing all the evil and vicious humours** which the soul has **never perceived** because they have been so **deeply rooted** and grounded in it;
it has never realized, in fact, that it has had so much evil within itself.
But now that they are to be driven forth and annihilated, these humours reveal themselves, and become visible to the soul because it is so brightly illumined by this **dark light of Divine contemplation** (although it is **no worse than before**, either in itself or in relation to God);
and, as it sees in itself that which it saw not before, it is clear to it that not only is it unfit to be seen by God, but deserves His abhorrence, and that He does indeed abhor it.
By this comparison **we can now understand many things** [7 things] concerning what we are saying and purpose to say.

3. **First**, we can understand how the very light and the loving wisdom which are to be united with the soul and to transform it are **the same** that at the beginning purge and prepare it: **even as** the very fire which transforms the log of wood into itself, and makes it part of itself, is that which at the first was preparing it for that same purpose.

4. **Secondly**, we shall be able to see how these afflictions are **not felt by the soul as coming from the said Wisdom**, since, as the Wise Man says, *all good things together come to the soul with her*. [163 (Wisdom 7:11)] They are felt as coming from the **weakness and imperfection which belong to the soul**;
without such purgation, the soul cannot receive its Divine light, sweetness and delight, even as the log of wood, when the fire acts upon it, cannot immediately be transformed **until it be made ready**;
wherefore the soul is greatly afflicted.
This statement is fully supported by the Preacher, where he describes all that he suffered in order that he might attain to union with wisdom and to the fruition of it, saying thus: *'My soul hath wrestled with*

her and my bowels were moved in acquiring her; therefore it shall possess a good possession.' [164 (Ecclesiastes 51:29)]

5. **Thirdly**, we can learn here incidentally **in what manner** souls are afflicted in purgatory. For the fire would have **no power over them**, even though they came into contact with it, if they had **no imperfections** for which to suffers.
These are the material upon which the fire of purgatory seizes; when that material is consumed **there is naught else that can burn**.
So here, when the imperfections are consumed, the affliction of the soul ceases and **its fruition remains**.

6. **The fourth** thing that we shall learn here is **the manner** wherein the soul, as it becomes purged and purified by means of this fire of love, **becomes ever more enkindled in love**, just as the wood grows hotter in proportion as it becomes the better prepared by the fire.
This **enkindling of love**, however, is **not always felt** by the soul, but **only at times when contemplation assails it less vehemently**, for then it has occasion **to see**, and even **to enjoy**, the work which is being wrought in it, and which is then revealed to it.
For it seems that **the worker** [the Holy Spirit] **takes his hand from** the work, and draws the iron out of the furnace, in order that something of the work which is being done **may be seen**;
and then there is occasion for the soul to observe **in itself** the good which it saw not while the work was going on. In the same way, when the flame ceases to attack the wood, it is possible to see how much of it has been enkindled.

7. **Fifthly**, we shall also learn from this comparison what has been said above--namely, **how true** it is that after each of these **periods of relief** the soul suffers once again, **more intensely and keenly** than before.
For, after that revelation [muestra] just referred to has been made, and after the more outward imperfections of the soul have been purified, **the fire of love** once **again attacks** that which has yet to be consumed and purified more inwardly.
The suffering of the soul now becomes **more intimate, subtle and spiritual**, in proportion as the fire refines away **the finer**,[165] **more intimate and more spiritual imperfections**, and those which are **most deeply rooted in its inmost parts**.
And it is here just as with the wood, upon which the fire, when it begins to penetrate it more deeply, acts with more force and vehemence [166] in preparing its most inward part to possess it.

8. **Sixthly**, we shall likewise learn here **the reason why** it seems to the soul that **all its good is over**, and that it is **full of evil**, since **naught comes to it at this time but bitterness**;
it is like the burning wood, which is touched by no air nor by aught else than by consuming fire.
But, when there occur other periods of relief like the first, **the rejoicing of the soul will be more interior** because the purification has been more interior also.

9. **Seventhly**, we shall learn that, although the soul has the most ample joy at these periods (so much so that, as we said, it sometimes thinks that its trials **can never return again**, although it is certain that they will return quickly),
it cannot fail to realize, if it is aware (and at times **it is made aware**) **of a root of imperfection** which remains, that its joy is incomplete, because a new assault seems to be threatening it; [167] when this is so, the trial returns quickly.
Finally, that which still remains to be purged and enlightened most inwardly **cannot well be concealed from the soul** in view of its experience of its former purification;[1] **even as also** in the wood it is the

[1] Lit., '. . . from the soul, with regard to that which has already been purified.'

most inward part that remains longest unkindled,[2] and the difference between it and that which has already been purged is clearly perceptible;
and, when this purification once more assails it most inwardly, it is no wonder if it seems to the soul **once more** that **all its good is gone**, and that it never expects to experience it again, for, now that it has been plunged into these most inward sufferings, all good coming from without is over.[3]

10. **Keeping this comparison, then, before our eyes**, together with what has already been said upon the first line of the first stanza concerning this dark night and its terrible properties, it will be well to **leave these sad experiences** of the soul and to begin to speak of **the fruit** of its tears and their blessed properties, whereof the soul begins to sing from this second line:

Kindled in loves [171][←→] with yearnings

[2] Lit., 'not enlightened': the word is the same as that used just above.
[3] The word translated 'over' is rendered 'gone' just above.