INTERRELATEDNESS AND SPIRITUAL MASTERS

Why Martin Buber Still Matters

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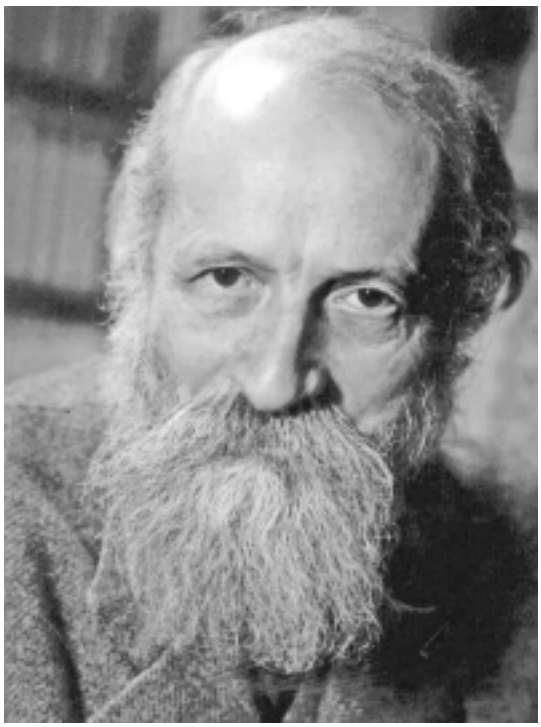
TWO THEMES IN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY seem, at first sight, to be quite unaligned. The first involves exploring the possibilities of a full, even radical, integration with creation and reimagining the world as the locus of profound inner transformation. The second involves spiritual masters who dramatically guide souls to union with God.

There are a number of reasons why these two areas of study might be considered strange bedfellows. We might think of the former in terms of eco-spirituality or nature mysticism. Such explorations tend to move towards an image of life as a web of mutuality, in which any hierarchical framework is, at best, counter-productive. However spiritualities, Christian or other, emphasizing a strong tradition of master and disciple almost inevitably involve power relationships that are not mutual. Furthermore, they tend to pursue the kind of contemplative approach that seeks less the interpenetration of life or discovery of the Spirit in the world and more something akin to *leaving the world*. They tend to be dualistic and, in the Christian tradition, rather platonic.

Imagining these two themes as divergent spiritual impulses need not be necessary, however. I have been led to a deep consideration of the interpenetration of all beings as a core spiritual value through my study of Buddhism, particularly Mahayana. But here spiritual masters are taken for granted as virtually, if not utterly, necessary for profound transformation. In traditional Western sources, however, this combination is far less aligned.

In this context, I should like to offer a new resource to the conversation, one that has the potential to expand our spiritual imaginations so as to experience the divine in the world in a manner that is also aligned with a strong role for the spiritual master. This resource is the work of Martin Buber (1878–1965).

The Way, 53/1 (January 2014), 63–75



Martin Buber

Martin Buber was born in Vienna, Austria, to an Orthodox Jewish family. His grandfather, with whom the young Martin lived for ten years, was a renowned scholar of rabbinic literature, and his family situation allowed him a rich education—he easily absorbed religious and secular languages (Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, German and, later, Greek, Latin, French, Italian and English). Through his studies he became fascinated with everything from his own Jewish faith to major philosophical trends of the day. As a professor, teaching in Germany and later in Israel, he became known as a prolific essayist, editor and philosophical voice in his day. Buber died well respected and loved.

His most important contribution to religious philosophy is certainly the book *I and Thou*, which was published in 1923. Several decades ago, *I and Thou* was still a staple in college philosophy courses, but even then this work was only imagined to be marginally important in the academy. Less well known is Buber's influence in bringing the Hasidic imagination into mainstream Judaism, where he has an enduring importance, albeit a relatively hidden one. If we look at both legacies together, I believe we will find a voice that is still profoundly relevant, particularly in the ways noted above.

Buber and the Hasidic Imagination

From Rabbi to Rebbe

Judaism has various forms—such as Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist—and each of these is itself a mere shorthand category with many permutations. Hasidic Judaism would typically be located within Orthodoxy, though it has something of a life of its own. Hasidism began in Eastern Europe as a reaction to a highly scholastic, abstract and dry approach to Jewish thinking, and even to Jewish life. Under the eighteenth-century mystic Israel ben Eliezer (*c.* 1700–1769), known

as Baal Shem Tov ('Master of the Good Name'), devout practice was integrated with an ecstatic sense of religiosity.

The traditional model of the rabbi is that of the Talmudic scholar. As far back as Rabbi Akiba (AD 50–135), reverence for the scholar was like reverence for God.[1] Studying the interpretations and applications of the Torah was a potent way to engage the spirit of Judaism, and even encounter the divine.[2] Today sacred study remains typically the highest expression of Jewish religiosity.

The Hasidic movement replaced the rabbi scholar with the *rebbe*, the 'master',[3] who now guided his followers by virtue of his spiritual power and holiness.[4] *Hasidut* means *piety*. So the *Hasidim* are the *pious ones*, and the *rebbe* is the pious among the pious.[5] The *rebbe* has *gravitas*. Buber describes meeting a *rebbe* as a young man. He was, for Buber, 'an incomparable'.[6] The *rebbe* came to be understood as a *tzaddik*, literally a 'righteous person', who could mediate intimacy with God.[7]

According to Elie Wiesel, Jews 'had good reason to doubt the absolute power of rationalism. So they turned inward and became mystical.'[8] Thus, for the Hasidim, Jewish life circled not around rationalism or even the intellect, but around the divine *spark*. 'They turned to the *rebbe*, for only he knew how to comfort them, how to impart to them a sense of sacredness'.[9] Buber writes of,

> … those who give true answer to the trembling mouth of the needy creature who time after time demands from them decision. This is one who knows that his speech is destiny …. Thus, he is the helper in spirit, the teacher of world-meaning, the conveyor to the divine sparks.[10]

Baal Shem Tov was the model. Buber describes him thus: 'He takes unto himself the quality of fervor. He arises from sleep with fervor, for he is

1 Ronald Pies, 'The Rabbi, the Zaddik, and the Zen Master', *Parabola*, 25/3 (2000), 90–96, here 90.
2 Ben Zion Bokser and Baruch M. Bokser, 'Introduction', in *The Talmud: Selected Writings*, translated by Ben Zion Bokser (New York: Paulist, 1989), 9–15.
3 *Rebbe* in Yiddish means 'master'. It could also be translated as 'teacher', but with a different connotation from *rabbi*, which also means 'teacher' and, in some sense, 'master'.
4 Elie Wiesel, *Four Hasidic Masters and Their Struggle against Melancholy* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame P, 1978), 129.
5 Martin Buber, *The Way of Man According to the Teaching of the Hasidim* (Secaucus: Carol, 1995), 5.
6 Martin Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, edited and translated by Maurice Friedman, second edn (Amherst: Humanity, 1958), 45.
7 Pies, 'The Rabbi, the Zaddik, and the Zen Master', 90.
8 Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy* (New York: Image, 1982), 216.
9 Wiesel, *Four Hasidic Masters*, 14. He also writes, 'The *rebbe* reveals nothing less than God's grandeur' (85).
10 Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, 60–61.

hallowed … and is worthy to create and become like the Holy One.'[11] On the day that Baal Shem Tov died, Rebbe Phinhas declared that he saw the divine manifestation (*Shekinah*) mourning at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.[12]

Rebbes *and Spiritual Mediation*

For the Hasidim, the *rebbe* was the instrument chosen by God to make the divine will known and implemented. The *rebbe* knew all the answers; his was the supreme authority.[13] Of the Holy Seer of Lublin it is written,

> In the midst of the Master, the weak forget their weakness, the old are unaware of their age, the poor are less poor, the sick forget their illnesses …. He carries them far away. They trust him. They do not know the outcome or the purpose of his secret plan; *he does*, and that should be enough.[14]

Stories about the power of *rebbe*s are legion. Some were supposed to be telepathic, others could interpret the past or future; most of all they had power in heaven. Of Baal Shem Tov it was written, 'He would intercede on people's behalf and heaven would submit to his will'.[15]

The story goes that Rebbe Israel Maggid of Kozhenitz always had his prayers obeyed by heaven, except one night. He was shocked, and demanded an explanation. When he received it, he understood and forgave God. What had happened was that Rebbe Naphtali of Ropshitz had come to the rescue of a wedding party which, owing to a family tragedy, was laden with a sad spirit. He entered the gathering, he charmed them, amused them and led them in songs of love. Like the wedding guests, the angels in heaven fell completely under his spell. Thus, they were not paying attention that night to other prayers.[16]

There is in Hasidism, as well as Judaism at large, a great respect for the individual and his or her unique expression of religiosity. *Rebbe*s are a part of the people and servants of the people. They were never meant to rob the community or individuals within it of their own paths.[17] As

[11] Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, 51.
[12] Wiesel, *Four Hasidic Masters*, 5.
[13] Wiesel, *Four Hasidic Masters*, 19, 82. See also Pies, 'The Rabbi, the Zaddik, and the Zen Master', 92.
[14] Wiesel, *Four Hasidic Masters*, 61–62.
[15] Wiesel, *Four Hasidic Masters*, 84.
[16] Wiesel, *Four Hasidic Masters*, 99–101.
[17] The *rebbe* embodies what the whole community should look like in its truest state. The *rebbe*, the *tzaddik*, himself symbolizes the age of redemption in his person. See Ehud Luz, 'Spiritual and Anti-Spiritual Trends in Zionism', in *Jewish Spirituality*, volume 2, edited by Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 371–401, here 374.

Buber insists, you must never intrude on the deep secret of the soul.[18] Baal Shem Tov wanted others to find the divine sparks in themselves and to raise them to God and reunite them to the divine kingdom.[19]

Even if mediator and intercessor are crucial roles for a *rebbe*, it could be argued that empowering the community to fulfil its role is the most important. The more powerful the *rebbe*, the more concerned that *rebbe* is to enable others. Rebbe Pinhas said,

> If I so desired, I could bring the Messiah as easily as I can lift a straw; but I prefer to rely on the Almighty. And He relies on humanity. If all Jews would give charity, redemption would occur …. If all of them would speak the truth, there would be no need to bring the Messiah; he would be here already.[20]

The charge of the *rebbe* is to instantiate poignantly the holy dignity of each of his followers and of the community itself. Wiesel writes that, 'They were endowed with mystical powers and they used them not to isolate themselves from their communities, but rather to penetrate them more deeply'.[21]

On the one hand, the *rebbe* lives only to help the community, and the souls in that community are understood as personal, unique expressions of faithfulness and manifestations of the divine image. On the other hand, every *rebbe*'s influential presence creates a style of faithfulness according to his own sensibilities. It is his religious imagination that infuses theirs, his way of comforting that becomes the form of divine comfort, his religious pronouncements that express the divine will. The confidence that a *rebbe* must have in his role ought to be coupled with deep humility. A true *tzaddik* is captured by God and thus knows more than anyone else that all good ultimately comes from God. A Master once said, 'If the Messiah should come today and say to me, "You are better than others", then I would say to him, "You are not the Messiah"'.[22]

The Influence of Buber

The Hasidic imagination is particularly significant in relation to the Jewish mysticism of *Kabbalah*, which was preserved and advanced most in the

[18] Buber, *The Way of Man*, 15–16, 35, and *Hasidism and Modern Man*, 103–104, 132.
[19] Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, 180–181.
[20] Wiesel, *Four Hasidic Masters*, 20.
[21] Wiesel, *Four Hasidic Masters*, 121–122.
[22] Buber, *The Way of Man*, 105.

Hasidic movement. Through Martin Buber, Hasidic stories and doctrine, and kabbalistic insights, have become integral to mainstream Judaism.[23] Elie Wiesel, whom I have freely quoted, was strongly influenced by Buber, who has discreetly become one of the great inspirations to the modern Jewish imagination.[24]

Buber is not, however, without his critics. The great Jewish scholar Gershom Scholem, also an important contributor to Jewish mysticism in the modern period, has demonstrated a serious bias in Buber's account of Hasidic Judaism.[25] Criticisms of Buber include that he downplays Hasidism's firm grounding in Jewish law and interpretation (*halakhah*) while overemphasizing its ecstatic religiosity. Buber also ignores problems in Hasidic culture, including autocratic *rebbe*s and historically exaggerated claims for their spiritual power.[26]

Much of this critique is fair in relation to the sociology of Hasidic communities. Buber's slant is very romantic, a charge he might well have accepted himself. Buber wanted to present the ethos of a profound religious imagination in such a way as to allow it to be appropriated within mainstream Judaism and beyond. He describes his intent as one of mediating the experience of Hasidism as it transformed his own consciousness, and also the existential stance to which Hasidism as a whole points.[27]

Buber's message to us, through the medium of Hasidism, is that the world is far more mystical and spiritually charged than we might think. Buber did not want to retreat into a medieval ethos, but to infuse our modern world-view with extraordinary divine possibilities. The infusion of Jewish Hasidic mysticism into our religious imagination can lead us to

[23] One need only consider the same Hasidic tendencies in Adin Steinsaltz, one of today's most formidable Talmudic scholars. See, for example, *The Thirteen Petalled Rose: A Discourse on the Essence of Jewish Existence and Belief*, translated by Yehuda Hanegbi (New York: Basic, 2006). Consider as well the great populariser of Jewish spirituality Lawrence Kushner, whose books, such as *Jewish Spirituality*, *God Was in This Place and I, I Did Not Know* and *Honey from the Rock*, all appear highly influenced by Buber's interpretation of Jewish mysticism and Hasidism.

[24] From 1947 to 1950 Wiesel studied at the Sorbonne, and frequently attended lectures by Buber. See also Frederick Downing, *Elie Wiesel: A Religious Biography* (Macon: Mercer UP, 2008), 77, 105. Wiesel's own influence is less a matter of advancing the study of Judaism than of presenting one form of the Jewish ethos to non-Jews. This is exactly his utility for my purposes here.

[25] Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 227–250.

[26] Steven Katz, *Post-Holocaust Dialogues: Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought* (New York: NYUP, 1983), 52–93.

[27] Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, 58. See also Martin S. Jaffee, introduction to *Hasidism and Modern Man*, ii–xxi, at xii–xiii.

see that the physical world has a supernatural superstructure, and that the saint knows how to negotiate the physical and spiritual at the same time.

Further, Buber reminds us of how important it is that our own spiritual leaders also be spiritual masters. Masters do not merely announce the sacred, they communicate it; and this necessitates being in profound communion with it. A master cannot only be a very good person, but has to have great spiritual depth.

Hasidic Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur*, by Maurycy Gottlieb*

A colleague once suggested to me that we should only ordain priests who were in the *illuminative way* and bishops who were in the *unitive way*: the illuminative way representing intimate, palpable, interior knowledge of God; and the unitive way representing a kind of mystical marriage with God. This is a very monastic way of framing things, and an unnecessary one. But the point is well made: our leaders, institutional and other, should be obviously and profoundly holy, and their ministry ought to emerge from an intimate knowledge of God.

Finally, Buber reminds us that spiritual mediation principally ought to be about empowering others. I believe this represents a universal and fundamental spiritual law: the more we mature in the spiritual life, the more we become our own masters. Our spiritual guides should be decidedly and overtly working towards that end.[28] Such individual empowerment also necessitates that spiritual leadership be deeply in touch with the community, with those being led. *Rebbe*s, Buber insists, are spiritual guides utterly immersed in the life of the faithful.

[28] We see this in various theories of human and spiritual development. See these taken up collectively in Peter Feldmeier, *The Developing Christian: Spiritual Growth through the Life Cycle* (Mahwah: Paulist, 2007), chapters 2 and 3. Segal and Barret also make this claim in 'Spiritual Masters', 11, 14.

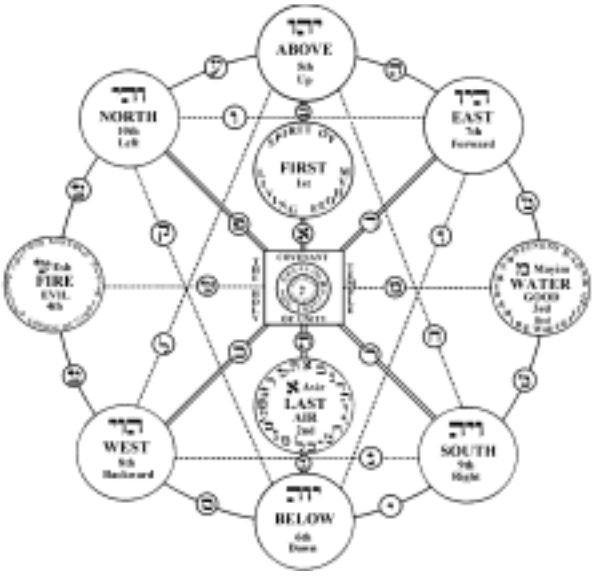
Buber and the I-Thou

Foundations in Hasidism

Most of those who know of Martin Buber probably know him through his classic text *I and Thou*. A legitimate, albeit surface, appropriation of this text has to do with bringing the whole self into relationship with another, and recognising that other not as something to objectify, but rather as someone to honour in his or her wholeness and integrity. This is indeed one of Buber's central insights. In a consumer culture where we are trained to see all things and even all people in terms of their utility, such a message is crucial. Buber calls this 'the dialogic principle'.

There is, however, much more to *I and Thou*; there is a spiritually denser vision to consider. This deeper appropriation starts from Buber's understanding of Hasidic spiritual impulses and the life of the holy person or *tzaddik*. Actually, *I and Thou* is Buber's attempt to formulate philosophical categories that convey his Hasidic mystical vision.[29]

Hasidic Judaism is deeply invested in the mysticism of the Kabbalah. One important expression of this came from the teachings of Isaac of Luria, and particularly from his cosmogony. According to this tradition, God self-contracted in order to make space for creation. In the process, God's light remained as God's immanent, underlying presence in creation. This light then filled the vessels (*sefirot*) that would structure creation. The first three of the ten vessels were able to retain the divine light. However, the next six burst. The physical earth, being the last, cracked but did not break up entirely. Most of the divine sparks of this supernal light returned to the Godhead, but some were trapped in the fragments of the burst vessels. The order of creation and the possibility for life and love



***Diagrammatic representation of the* sefirot**

[29] Laurence J. Silberstein, 'The Renewal of Jewish Spirituality', in *Jewish Spirituality*, volume 2, 402–432, here 413.

come from these divine sparks. That the world is also disordered reflects the break-up of the vessels in the created universe. Repairing them is the challenge of all devout humans, Jews and non-Jews alike. For many Jews, the task of humanity, until the coming of the Messiah, is to raise the divine sparks and restore them to their appropriate place in the divine realm. This process will come to its final conclusion in the Messianic Age.

Buber saw in this mystical creation myth the radical spiritual unity of all creation. Since each spark was originally a part of the primordial divine unity, each person embodies a part of that divinity and is linked to all other beings by means of their divine sparks. Buber writes, 'As the primal source of the divine is bound with all his soul-sparks scattered in the world, so what we do to our fellow men is bound with what we do to God'.[30]

What if everything in the world was profoundly united as an interpenetrating collective reality? Is this vision possible? According to Buber, the Hasidim wisely thought so, and had the experience to support their belief. One Hasidic master had to put on slightly distorting spectacles in order to restrain his spiritual vision; 'for otherwise he saw all individual things of the world as one'.[31] Another 'had so sanctified all his limbs that each step of his feet wed worlds to one another'.[32] Buber writes,

> Hasidism is one of the great movements of faith that shows directly that the human soul can live as a whole, united in itself in communication with the wholeness of being … a multitude of souls bound into a community …. The clear flame of human unity embraces all forces and ascends to the divine unity.[33]

This insight of spiritual interpenetration is not simply a Hasidic one, but now a part of mainstream Judaism. Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, in his book *Jewish Spirituality*, writes, 'There are invisible lines or threads that tie the universe to us and us to the universe. These invisible lines also join us to God.'[34] And later,

> In order to give yourself over completely to the sacred deed, you must be willing to lose yourself; dissolve like a drop of water in the ocean—no longer understood as a separate or discrete thing. This is a fusion

[30] Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, 241.
[31] Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, 70.
[32] Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, 79.
[33] Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, 248.
[34] Lawrence Kushner, *Jewish Spirituality: A Brief Introduction for Christians* (Woodstock, Vt: Jewish Lights, 2001), 34.

> with the divine. The borders of yourself are erased. All that remains now instead is the unity of all being.[35]

Buber begins *I and Thou* with a simple observation: humanity has two possible postures in the world—one is *I-Thou* and the other is *I-It*. The difference between these postures is not merely between approaching the world in reverence (*Thou*) and as an object of utilitarian use (*It*), though certainly this is a critical difference. A more fundamental distinction between these two postures is how we understand our very selves or, better, how we understand the nature of what it means to *be*.

> The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak.
>
> The basic words are not single words but word pairs.
>
> One basic word is the word pair I-Thou.
>
> The other basic word is the word pair I-It ….
>
> The basic word I-Thou can only be spoken with one's whole being.
>
> The basic word I-It can never be spoken with one's whole being.
>
> There is no I as such, but only the I of the basic word I-Thou and the I of the basic word I-It …. Whoever speaks one of the basic words enters into the word and stands in it.[36]

For Buber, to live a life of *I-Thou* is to live in interrelation—and interrelation is reciprocity and interpenetration. Buber teaches that in an *I-Thou* posture there is no possibility of objectifying the other as 'a loose bundle of named qualities'. Rather, reality and relationality become, 'seamless, he [the other] is You and fills the firmament'.[37] Such engagements represent not only the intersubjectivity among creatures, but also that with God. Buber teaches that all authentic relationships 'intersect in the eternal Thou'.[38]

In Dialogue with Christian Spirituality

This radial unitive vision forms a profound contrast with the standard Western one, in which beliefs in humanity's separation from creation and

[35] Kushner, *Jewish Spirituality*, 68.
[36] Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, second edn (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 53–54.
[37] Buber, *I and Thou*, 59.
[38] Buber, *I and Thou*, 123.

a person's utter distinction from others run deep. Some blame this lack of human integration on Descartes' elevation of a discrete, self-authorizing human subject. But really this current of thought runs from Aristotle to Augustine, and even through German idealism. Both an autonomous self and an autonomous humanity have become locked into our consciousness. Buber insists that this ought not to be. Who are we, in relationship to others and the world? Of course, we each have our own centre of consciousness, and indeed our own soul. Are they, however, utterly distinct from others, or are we all part of a universal web of life? And, if the latter, how ought this to be understood?

Who are we, in relationship to others and the world?

Buber invites us into a mystical worldview where life is seamless, inter-penetrating and utterly charged with spiritual power and possibilities. He also challenges us to consider modern possibilities for spiritual masters. Certainly, Christianity has a venerable tradition of this kind, but it is also the case that this tradition has been significantly diminished.

As the patristic period developed, profound spiritual guides became distinct from the institutional Church. The bishop was a *vir venerabilis*, in contrast with the *vir religiosus* and *femina religiosa*.[39] These latter Christians tended to live a radical lifestyle of prayer and asceticism. To junior monks and nuns, as well as to many ordinary Christians, they were spiritual fathers and mothers. Given their deep insight into the spiritual journey, their ability to read souls and their intimacy with the Holy Spirit, they were considered fully equipped to guide others. Masters had an uncanny ability to know just what a given disciple would need to progress at that moment. Because of their knowledge, experience and ability to guide, these masters garnered extraordinary authority and trust.

One reason that these spiritual masters were successful is that the spiritual path was considered relatively predictable. Many Christians had a one-size-fits-all mentality. The chief role of the master was to discern what stage of spiritual development the aspirant had attained and counsel accordingly. Spiritual masters realised that paths were not utterly linear for everyone. Still, these differences represented variations of the same grand scheme of spiritual development. The notion of a relatively clear model followed the patristic period, through the medieval and even into

[39] See Peter Brown's *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman World* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995) and 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 61 (1971), 80–101.

the early modern period. John Climacus listed 26 progressive stages to union with God; Evagrius Ponticus held that there were five major stages; the medieval master Richard of St Victor taught a twelve-stage progression; and Teresa of Ávila named seven. All follow a consistent pattern: the awakening of the soul and a determination to pursue holiness, a purgation of sin and the embrace of a spiritually disciplined life, a development of prayer and deepening of interiority, an illumination whereby one becomes a contemplative, a crisis of faith or dark night, and finally a resolution in full intimacy with God.

In the modern period, there are at least two interrelated changes in assumptions about the nature of the spiritual journey. Perhaps the greatest change has to do with the new value placed on the unique individual path of each soul. Secondly, we have come to recognise the Holy Spirit as self-empowering. Thus, the absolute authority of a spiritual director is questioned more and more. In his *Spiritual Exercises*, St Ignatius of Loyola instructs the director to support the aspirant's personal discovery of God's will. Thus, there is no master who is presumed to know where God is taking the soul. Rather a director facilitates the aspirant's listening to the movements of the Holy Spirit within.[40]

In no way am I suggesting returning to a patristic or model of a more or less singular vision of spiritual development. I am also not suggesting that Christianity somehow adopt the *rebbe* model of a community *tzaddik*. Rather, I would like, among other things, to provoke consideration of reviving the possibilities of masters who are fully empowered by spiritual aspirants to help them discover their own spiritual possibilities. I am also suggesting that many values inherent in the Hasidic tradition of the *rebbe*—deep community knowledge and participation, personal holiness and empowerment of others—should inspire our own ecclesial leadership and spiritual direction.

Martin Buber has played a crucial role in guiding many Jews and non-Jews alike to think about the power of spiritual masters in leading us into a vision of the universe as a spiritually fascinating play of matter and spirit, as a collection of divine sparks of individuality and wholeness, as a place of interrelated tragedy and glory and, above all, as a place where one's subjectivity meets others to form possibilities of deep communion.

[40] See Annotations 15 and 22, and Peter Feldmeier, *Encounters in Faith: Christianity in Interreligious Dialogue* (Winona: Anselm, 2011), 56–58.

To embrace Buber's vision is no longer to relate to others as *I-It*. Rather, it is to recognise all as brothers and sisters who are integral to our true selves. Only then will our souls be the natural expression of a universe aflame with the presence of the risen Christ, uniting all things in heaven and on earth.

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