

The mystical and the prophetic

Dimensions of Christian existence

Robert J. Egan

THE IDEA OF 'THE MYSTICAL' has had a stormy history in the modern period. Although individual mystics, especially women, caused dangerous anxieties in high-placed churchmen throughout the mediaeval period, few voices were raised in unequivocal opposition to mysticism before the Reformation. Since then, however, a suspicion of mysticism has become an established tradition in western culture: at first, in important parts of Protestantism, seeing mysticism as essentially alien to New Testament Christianity, and therefore as 'Catholic' or 'Hellenistic' or 'Asiatic'; then also in secular, rationalist thought, seeing mysticism as superstitious, irrational and delusional. By the end of the seventeenth century, a form of Catholic nervousness about mysticism joined these other currents, seeing mysticism as the rare privilege of a chosen few but fraught with danger for all others. For this reason, when I joined a Jesuit novitiate in 1967, the books on mysticism were kept in a locked cabinet in the novice master's office.

Since those days much has changed, both within the post-Vatican II Church and in western culture generally. In the years following the sixties, a serious and widening interest appeared among many Americans in various Buddhist traditions, in aspects of Hinduism, in Sufism, Jewish mysticism, Native American spiritualities, shamanism and various western esoteric traditions. Although less clearly a popular movement, a serious interest in Christian spirituality and mysticism at the same time developed in some American academic circles and at certain important publishing houses. As a result, we now have responsible access to our spiritual and mystical traditions in a way we have never had before. At the same time, we have been aroused from political complacency to face more bravely and intelligently our responsibilities as citizens to build a more just, attentive and compassionate society. This, all too briefly, is the background to what follows. I want to raise a question about 'the mystical' and 'the prophetic' dimensions of the Christian faith and to reflect on the relationship between them.

read more at www.theway.org.uk

A polarity of mystical and prophetic religions?

Just fifty years ago, Ray C. Petry of the Duke University Divinity School gave the presidential address at the annual meeting of the American Society of Church History in New York City. It was entitled, 'Social responsibility and the late mediaeval mystics'.¹ At the beginning of his address, Petry referred to 'a predominant area of ignorance within the Western World', identifying it as 'the growing unawareness of the balance maintained in the Christian tradition between contemplative worship of the Divine and active service of the human'.² In this address, Petry had no difficulty pointing out that several selected mystics of stature did, in fact, both exemplify and encourage an active service of others. But this balance about which he spoke seems *always* to be fading from awareness – and being rediscovered only occasionally.

It does not help to insist that somehow these two domains of human life constitute *one and the same* dimension of the faith. I want to make my own the position which Paul Ricoeur takes in regard to an analogous contrast between 'manifestation and proclamation'. At the very beginning of his essay on the subject he writes: 'This essay will deal with the study of a polarity or tension that I wish neither to see disappear into a simple identity, nor to allow to harden into a sterile antinomy, or still less an unmediated dichotomy'.³ But what precisely *is* this polarity? Is it just the temperamental differences between what Jung called 'introversion' and 'extroversion'? Or is it the tug of mostly implicit ideologies tending towards 'idealism' or 'materialism'? Some cynics have claimed that the contrast is really due to the difference between narcissistic personality disorders and various old-fashioned neuroses. Some have even traced the contrast ultimately to the difference between Asian and Semitic religious traditions, or archetypal feminine and masculine energies.

The terms of this debate will be familiar from other articles in this Supplement. A sharp separation of the mystical from the prophetic has been proposed by several scholars and was given a rhetorically powerful and erudite expression in the influential study by Friedrich Heiler called *Prayer: a study in the history and psychology of religion*, first published in German in 1919 and in English in 1931.⁴ The middle chapters of this book are devoted to a detailed contrast between mystical and prophetic religions.⁵ Heiler's personal history had led him from Catholicism to Lutheranism, and if there is any truth in the often repeated claim that Protestantism is a religion of the 'either/or' and Catholicism a religion of the 'both/and', these chapters are intensely,

even extravagantly, Protestant. For the most part, Heiler characterizes the mystical and the prophetic as opposites, and it would not in my judgment be unfair to read them as an *apologia* for his conversion.⁶

Yet in the final analysis, these chapters record not a careful effort of historical description, but the intoxication of binary systems of classification. For Heiler, mysticism is silent and contemplative, dissolving and melting, while prophetic religion is passionate and groaning. It is not surprising that eventually these antinomies come to include life and death.⁷

The fundamental psychic experience in mysticism is the denial of the impulse of life, a denial born of weariness of life . . . The fundamental psychic experience in *prophetic* religion is an uncontrollable will to live, a constant impulse to the assertion, strengthening and enhancement of the feeling of life, a being overmastered by values and tasks . . .⁸

It seems hard to make this picture of mysticism fit Gregory of Nyssa, Bernard of Clairvaux, Hildegard of Bingen, Richard of St Victor, Bonaventure, Meister Eckhart, or even Teresa of Avila whom Heiler takes to be a good example of this type – cool, passive and resigned. When do counterexamples destabilize a theory? The fact is that some Christian mystics also seem to behave like prophets – Francis of Assisi, Ramón Lull, Catherine of Siena, Ignatius Loyola and William Blake might be considered examples. And ‘weariness of life’ hardly seems the right characterization for Jalal al-Din Rumi, Philip Neri, or the Ba’al Shem-Tov. Even the Buddha, who might admittedly have smiled silently at Heiler’s description of prophetic virtues, taught compassion and worked hard until his final hours to teach the *dharma* to others who looked to him for guidance.

This is not to deny, of course, that a *distinction* can be made between an experience of enlightenment or of mystical union, and an experience of being called by God and sent on a mission. A distinction can be made between the mystic’s ecstatic testimony to the accessibility of divine love and the prophet’s message of social crisis and summons to repentance on behalf of an Other. Yet such distinctions are not oppositions. The apostle Paul, for example, whom Heiler believes stands in the company of Jeremiah, Jesus and Luther as the greatest prophetic masters of prayer in human history, is seen by other scholars, from Albert Schweitzer to Alan Segal, as a great representative of *mystical* religion.⁹

There have been several efforts to see Jesus as both a prophet and a mystic, and several efforts to understand the interweaving of these categories in the phenomena we call eschatological and apocalyptic.¹⁰ In much recent scholarship, the genre of 'apocalyptic' especially seems to fuse these two categories.¹¹ The prophetic and political dimension of Jesus' teaching and ministry has received considerably more scholarly attention, especially in the last thirty years, and along with renewed interest in apocalyptic and new understandings of eschatology, seems now to be one of the most important achievements of New Testament studies in the last half century.¹² There has been considerably less scholarly attention given to 'religious experience' in the Jesus movement or early Christianity.¹³ Nevertheless, valuable contributions have been made.¹⁴ Perhaps we are still being misled by our own terminology in this inquiry. We certainly need to work through some of the presuppositions brought to these considerations by the influence of later polemics. This includes the way we understand early Christian 'prophecy', experiences of being 'filled with the Holy Spirit', the sense we give to the term 'charismatic', and the vexing question of Christian 'gnosticism'.

What is clear is that certain kinds of recurrent and powerful religious experiences impelled early Christians radically to alter the quality of their interpersonal relationships, their responses to others in need, and their responses to many customary attitudes and behaviours in their cultural environments.

Spirituality and the mystical

Readers of this journal will appreciate how difficult definitions of 'spirituality' have become in recent years. The word derives, I believe, from St Paul's way of talking about human lives transformed by the Holy Spirit, transformed from a realm of 'flesh' that seems to connote especially habit and diminished attention, a 'conditioned' state. Histories of Christian spirituality often skip most of the first three centuries and begin in a formal way with the rise of the desert solitaries. There, a tradition is established that lasted, arguably, until the eighteenth century in the West, or perhaps even until the middle of the last century, and which probably lasts to this day in the Eastern Orthodox churches. This tradition, at least, is easier to define. It is a search for 'the vision of God' in this life through the achievement of 'purity of heart'. This search advances in stages, and these stages of a journey are also stages of a growth in holiness. Holiness in this sense, we might say, is the subjective capacity for the *unio mystica*, for

experiencing the presence of God, and even for deification, conscious participation in the divine nature.

Is it possible, then, to distinguish in some way between 'the presence of God' and 'the subjective capacity'? It is of course misleading to think of God as a discrete object of possible experience over against us. Still, it is possible to distinguish, in what came to be called 'spirituality', an intentional transformation of human subjectivity, about which we might hope to say something intelligible, from the divine-making-its-presence-felt as such, which must always remain essentially mysterious. The former was sometimes called 'the pursuit of perfection' – a pursuit which has parallels in other religious traditions.¹⁵

The contemporary discussion of spirituality often seems shy of the ideas of 'subjectivity', 'the interior life' and 'interiority', as though these ideas were too limited, too narrow, or too private, to serve the robust purposes of an adequate definition. But this is due to a misunderstanding of these words – for there is, fundamentally, nothing limited or narrow or private about them. The transformation of subjectivity affects everything we experience, because it changes the condition of our hearts. The spiritual life is not primarily about a whole new set of objects for our concern, but about the depth, the clarity and the quality of our concern. It is not about painting beautiful pictures of God and the saints on the inside of the bag around our heads; it is about getting the bag off our heads. A spiritual practice changes not the objects of our vision, but our *eyes*.¹⁶ This is why, in looking for analogies, falling in love and being intoxicated have so often come to mind.¹⁷

In this process of changing subjectivity, although of course it is a process that goes on for as long as we live (and maybe forever, as Gregory of Nyssa thought), there is a 'split' or 'dichotomy' that cannot be transcended. It is the state of the soul before and after a *metanoia*, a metamorphosis, the contrast between an old self and a new. And between these two, there is an experience of passage, death and rebirth, the crossing of a crucial threshold.¹⁸

But what dies and what is born? Concerning this question, Sebastian Moore has written, 'it is hardly to be doubted that the answer has to be on the lines of a distinction between the ego and the self'.¹⁹ Spirituality, then, has something to do with the discovery that our initial sense of self is only provisional, not something to consolidate and cling to indefinitely. The importance of this discovery can hardly be exaggerated. Jacob Needleman says somewhere that it is like an egg: when it

begins to crack and roll around, it isn't helpful to rush in and tape it back together, or even to paint it bright colors. The point is to let the chick come out. What prevents such a birth is often referred to, all too simplistically, as 'sin'.

Something awful happens to all of us in childhood. This version of ourselves we're calling 'ego' seems to form on the basis of some real or perceived deficiency of being loved, being cared for, being attended to, such that our subsequent efforts to survive in the world are all to some degree compensatory, and our self-esteem is built as a result upon a certain deadness, a scar, in our hearts. It is this, I think, that William James refers to when he speaks of 'an uneasiness' at the roots of consciousness, 'a sense that there is *something wrong about us* as we naturally stand'. And the solution, James says, 'is a sense that *we are saved from the wrongness* by making proper connection with the higher powers'.²⁰ It is only in and through the experience of salvation, only once we have come to our senses, that we realize that we really were *confined* and 'in captivity'.

Social justice and the prophetic

How do we mend this perceived alienation from 'higher powers'? In his book of *Conferences*, John Cassian tells a story about the abbot Moses, a desert elder renowned for his sanctity, who discussed with him and his friend Germanus the art of being a monk. Like every art or profession, the monk's life must have a unifying goal, to which all the monk's labours may joyfully be given. This goal, for the monk, is 'union with God' and the means to achieve this goal is 'purity of heart'. Cassian and Germanus understand this teaching and agree with it completely. The obvious conclusion is that they should follow wholeheartedly anything that can bring them to this goal and avoid anything that pulls them away. But then they wonder about the status and value of 'the works of mercy, justice, piety and humanity'. They understand that these are praised by the gospels as essential for discipleship. But if purity of heart and the vision of God are the true goals of the exemplary Christian life, how are these other works related to them?

Abbot Moses makes a careful and precise reply in which he reflects on the actual circumstances in which Christians live and points to some of the forces at work in these circumstances. He begins, we might say, by doing 'social analysis'. He says:

As for those works of piety and charity of which you speak, these are necessary in the present life for as long as inequality prevails. Their workings here would not be required were it not for the superabundant numbers of the poor, the needy and the sick. These are there because of the iniquity of those who have held for their own private use what the common Creator had made available to all. As long as this iniquity rages in the world, these good works will be necessary and valuable to anyone practicing them and they shall yield the reward of an everlasting inheritance to those of good heart and concerned will.²¹

Achieving purity of heart in this world entails acknowledging that things are not as they should be around us. Only for as long as the number of the poor, needy and sick is 'superabundant', only for as long as 'this iniquity rages', are these works of mercy and justice religiously essential. They will cease in the time to come, Moses says, 'when equality shall reign'. But inequality is part of the historical situation in which we find ourselves. This affects, in a fundamental way, our understanding of that road our hearts must follow unswervingly.

Here is an example of what Edward Schillebeeckx calls 'a contrast experience'.²² Our love of life and of other people are, in such a circumstance, thrown into a crisis, requiring us to break from the routine of everydayness and from the established social order, and to search instead for a way that leads from here to justice. Nothing really honest or hopeful can be said or done unless there is first *an interruption*, which shatters the numbness of familiarity and discloses the contingent character of how things stand, bringing with it the realization that everything could be otherwise.

What allows us to see is *fullness of life*. Sin is viewed as *part* of a way of life – not an exciting way of life, but one that is essentially deadening. The formation called 'the ego' is not in itself evil, yet it is the source from which all moral evil is loosed upon the world. The ego can adjust to almost anything; it gets used to whatever is happening. But this predicament of ego is never merely an individual's problem, since the ego interacts with other egos in a world. It casts its story about itself like a net, and it catches whomever it can. Other egos do the same and together they constitute a kind of network, a specific kind of intersubjectivity, that takes for granted a deficiency of love and attention and instead lives on competition for compensatory ideals. Every kind of subjectivity is a kind of intersubjectivity. The New Testament word for this negative network is 'this world' – the habits and customs of human habitation, the concrete form of human sociality,

as we find it historically. The 'world' is how we are together in our villages and cities, the 'structures' built up from our practices, the roles we play, and the statuses we occupy.

But just as human beings, despite a propensity to sin, are created good, so too a form of human dwelling-together can be imagined that is wholesome, loving and peaceful – even if the forms of dwelling-together as we actually find them are shot through with anxiety, greed and vanity. Nevertheless, as the ego is to the total self, so the world is to something else, something imaginable, something that can become the object of our hearts' longing – a 'new situation' that is different from the old. In the language of Jesus, it is called 'the reign (*basileia*) of God'. This is not something that Jesus is 'predicting' will happen. His announcing of its possibility is, effectively, a making-present of its imminence.²³ It actually comes to exist as something we can set our hearts on through his imagination and his speech. It is not something we can make happen, of course, but neither is it something *God* can do alone. Our task is to *learn how* to imagine it. That is, I think, the purpose of much of Jesus' teaching. As we imagine it, we can set our hearts on it, educate our desires in its direction, and let our desires reshape our practices and goals.

Awakening the heart

Since we are inherently social beings, we cannot help but contribute to one 'network' or the other, *this* world or the kingdom of God. To a considerable extent, this decision is a matter of 'motivation'. Different motives lead to different actions, different actions to different outcomes. Motives, we could say, are conditions of desire, perhaps even interpretations of desire. It is not so much the desire that constitutes the problem in this reading, as it is the woundedness of our desire. Our desire for a wholeness and balance beyond what seems possible for us thus always has both a subjective and objective or social pole. If we think of the scene between David and Nathan after David's marriage to Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, of the story of the poor man's lamb in which Nathan catches the conscience of the king, and of David's grief and remorse (2 Samuel 12: 1–25), as a model of personal repentance, then by extending the model, we can imagine a prophet's word awakening the heart of a whole people, cutting through a cover story, showing them the truth about themselves. This is what I mean by 'the prophetic'.²⁴ Through the prophet's speech there is an epiphany, a disclosure of truth, about suffering human beings seen with a heart of

flesh rather than a heart of stone, seen first by the broken and awakened heart of the prophet.

We are fully alive, the prophet tells us, only when our hearts are responsive to the other who is excluded or in pain, sick, oppressed, or overburdened. From the airless place of ego, we may feel we cannot bear to feel the pain, but in 'a total self' in which we have a 'place in God's world', we spontaneously feel compassion as an integral part of the abundance of life. I don't believe there is an answer to the question: why should we love another? It's just that the experience of abundant life overwhelms our anxious self-isolation. It entails an experience of sympathetic identification and unbroken solidarity with others. 'A monk is a man', says Evagrius Ponticus, 'who considers himself one with all men because he seems constantly to see himself in every man.'²⁵

Spirit, consciousness and culture

One key to understanding the two dimensions, 'the mystical' and 'the prophetic', seems to lie in the distinction between subjectivity and social objectivity. If we were to emphasize the task of *changing* or *transforming* both, we would connect them by way of a process which in our own tradition is associated with the Holy Spirit.²⁶ The Spirit raises us above false dichotomies – but still works to achieve a deep and lasting change dialectically: both the inner and the outer must be changed in the same process.

The years following Vatican II have allowed us to see the breakdown of this dialectic within our own Church, for at the Council we tried to turn around without acknowledging that we had been going in the wrong direction. We tried to repent but without any compunction. So the social structures of church life itself remained the same and in less than twenty years the 'new consciousness' was being marginalized and replaced. But these years also allowed us to see the search for a better understanding of this needed dialectic played out in *the search for new theological foundations* in Catholicism.

Both Rahner and Lonergan made foundational for their theologies the transformation of the Christian subject.²⁷ For Rahner it was the personal appropriation of the forgiving love and self-gift of the mystery of God, what we usually call 'sanctifying grace'. For Lonergan it was the experience of 'conversion' and its appropriation in different zones of personal life: in mind, heart, will and the whole embodied person. Then first Johann Baptist Metz, then others, questioned these theological projects, pointing out that they were centred on the individual

and were usually explicitly concerned primarily with the private sphere.²⁸ This Christian subject always belongs to a social class, practises a particular faith, possesses both a gender identity and a sexual orientation. In addition, the individual can only be understood in terms of personal relationships, memberships in diverse communities, particular social locations and ongoing social conflicts, and has to be grasped not only as a centre of reflection and thought, but also, and perhaps primarily, as an agent. In political and liberation theologies, then, the 'foundational' reality is *praxis*, a thought-filled, deliberate, collaborative kind of action in the service of the structural transformation of society.

If we could affirm Rahner's emphasis on the mystical and Metz's emphasis on the prophetic, political and apocalyptic, refusing to treat them as forced options, but insisting on the creation of space for both of them in our hearts, in our Church, in our practice of theology, then we would take an important step forward in the still unfinished *aggiornamento* of Catholicism.

My proposal differs from Rahner's and from Metz's only by way of its explicit commitment to pluralism. In principle, the categories of the mystical and the prophetic can be specified in a variety of ways. The whole history of the Church – and, more broadly, of mystical and prophetic experience – may be heard as testimony to these general dimensions of faith. Not everyone will feel called to exactly the same spirituality or exactly the same politics. The theology of Metz, for example, is sometimes criticized for its lack of specific social or political proposals, but perhaps specific proposals should ordinarily come from teams of ethicists and social scientists working with local faith communities. Through prayerful reflection and discernment, different individuals will discover and choose different vocations and missions. What seems essential to me is that theological foundations must be articulated in regard to both a mystical and a prophetic or political dimension. Neither can be elided.

This dialectical theology, to deserve the name of 'Christian', must serve a 'messianic', a redemptive purpose. If this theology is to be, in the first place, authentically *practical*, rather than (in Metz's sense) 'idealist', then it must take up the theme of human action in history as both the matrix of its arising and the goal of its intent, an action that like all action must be guided by an *interest*, and in this case by a hungering and thirsting for justice for *all* human beings. Only a heart unbound, an imagination set free from captivity by God's outpouring of Spirit, can sustain such a hunger and such a thirst. A theology that is both mystical

and prophetic would be capable of thinking the full truth of a redemptive mission in history. To be the subjects and authors and practitioners of such a theology, we would have to be entirely in the world, but utterly *not of it*. We would have to withdraw our hearts from many of their typical investments and learn how to set them on something else entirely, that alternative situation Jesus called God's *basileia*, which is always 'very near' and yet awaiting an inward welcome. We need to let Jesus teach us the deeper meaning of our own desire and to let the Holy Spirit bring us to desire this deeper meaning.

The search for new foundations

In order to move decisively beyond mere verbalism in theology, we need not so much a new theory, method, or system, as a new practice of Christianity. We need a theology that helps us live and share the faith more fully. A theology that understands the transformation of the self and of society to be foundational will go a long way to overcome the alienation of theology from life. I understand the turn toward spirituality and praxis in so much of our contemporary theology as part of a many-sided effort to reorientate theology towards the intelligent, thoughtful and wholehearted *practice* of our faith.

Recently John O'Malley has warned us that something strange has happened to our understanding of what is at stake in being Christian:

The new Catechism of the Catholic Church is a stunning monument to the conviction that what is really important is to get the right ideas into people's heads – a whole book full of them. I call this phenomenon the 'doctrinalization' of Christianity. It's an *ugly* word, but I think it gets across the point that somehow or other everything seems to come down to ideas or systems of ideas.²⁹

We are now trying to transcend this profoundly distorting doctrinalization of Christianity. We are trying to experience the gospel again as a gift and a task, a gift of astonishment and love, a task of kind and redemptive service. Both a mystical and a prophetic dimension are essential to Catholic Christianity understood primarily in this practical way. We are searching for a political spirituality and for a spiritual politics, but also for a theology that tells what is essential by reflecting on the constitutive dimensions of Catholicism as a lived religion.³⁰ Both a mystical and a prophetic dimension are essential to Catholic Christianity. They are both places in life where the Spirit is at work. They both have compelling witnesses in our tradition and they both

have roots in the New Testament. They have both helped to shape a contemporary hermeneutic practice that makes this tradition and the biblical testimony available to us in a fully responsible and contemporary way.

What we are trying to envision for the future is what David Tracy has called 'a fully mystico-prophetic contemporary Christian theology where the mystically transformed self, reflecting on the profound implications of the one God as essentially Triune, returns to the world freed for life in all its earthiness and all its search for justice and love'.³¹ In a similar way, Gustavo Gutiérrez has written: 'Without prophecy the language of contemplation runs the risk of detachment from history in which God is acting . . . Without the mystical dimension, the language of prophecy can narrow its vision and weaken its perception of that which makes all things new'.³² In the space between calling and mission, between gift and task, we may learn a new language of faith, 'a mystical language about God that recognizes the presence and fullness of God's gratuitous love . . . a prophetic language about God the liberator who rebels against the unjust death of the poor.'³³

What new thing will be needed for us to move in this direction? The key to understanding the mysticism we need lies in its *acceptance of the body*, its full consent to embodied human life and so to the equal dignity of both the feminine and the masculine experience of being, a mysticism that acknowledges mortality but does not break our bonds with other human beings, a mysticism that does not despair of earthly circumstances or their future. This would be, then, perhaps for the first time, a truly incarnational mysticism, a way to God that finds God in all things, and that discloses to us the truth about our being-with-each-other: that we belong to one other in Christ, that we are more than metaphorically members of one body, that we are in this together for once and for all.

Robert J Egan SJ, an Associate Editor of *The Way*, teaches theology and spirituality at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. He has also published articles and reviews in *Commonweal*, *Church*, and *Compass*.

NOTES

- 1 Ray C. Petry, 'Social responsibility and the late medieval mystics', *Church History* 21 (1952), pp 3–19.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p 3.
- 3 See Paul Ricoeur, 'Manifestation and proclamation', in his *Figuring the sacred: religion, narrative and imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), pp 48–67, at p 48. This article was originally published in the *Blaisdell Institute Journal* 11 (1978), pp 13–35.
- 4 Friedrich Heiler, *Prayer: a study in the history and psychology of religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; original Oxford edition in the United States, 1932). For a recent restatement of this polarity, with reference to Heiler and others, see, Peter L. Berger, *The heretical imperative: contemporary possibilities of religious affirmation* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1979), p 168 ff. Cf Peter L. Berger (ed), *The other side of God: a polarity in world religions* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1981). This volume collects papers that were given at a seminar that met from 1978 to 1980 under the chairmanship of Peter Berger. The agenda expressed, based on this polarity, but in terms of 'confrontation' and 'interiority', essentially between 'the monotheistic traditions of the West' and 'the great religions of southern and eastern Asia', was proposed by the chairman (p vii). 'As was to be expected', Berger wrote in the Preface, 'this topology was sharply criticized in the course of the seminar and some of the participants (including the chairman, who first proposed it) were prepared after a while to abandon it' (p viii). For Berger's discussion, see 'The other side of God – problem and agenda', in *ibid.*, pp 3–27.
- 5 Friedrich Heiler, *ibid.*, chapters 6–9, pp 135–285.
- 6 For a confirming, but subtler, and considerably more gracious criticism than my own, see Rowan Williams, 'The prophetic and the mystical: Heiler revisited', *New Blackfriars* 64 (1983), pp 330–347.
- 7 It is not surprising, but perhaps a little disturbing, as Bishop Williams observed, that the masculine is associated with life, the feminine with death. See *ibid.*
- 8 Friedrich Heiler, *ibid.*, p 142.
- 9 See Albert Schweitzer, *The mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968, original German edition, 1930) and Alan F. Segal, *Paul the convert: the apostolate and apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
- 10 See for example, Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: an experiment in christology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979); Amos N. Wilder, *Jesus' parables and the war of myths: essays on imagination in the Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and community: the social dimension of Christian faith*, translated by John P. Galvin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict, holiness, and politics in the teachings of Jesus* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press International, 1998); *idem*, *Jesus, a new vision: spirit, culture and the life of discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: millenarian prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); and Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: apocalyptic prophet of the new millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- 11 See John J. Collins, *The apocalyptic imagination: an introduction to Jewish apocalyptic literature*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998); Christopher Rowland, *The open heaven: a study of apocalyptic in Judaism and early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1983); *idem*, 'Apocalyptic, mysticism and the New Testament', in P. Shafer (ed), *Festschrift für M. Hengel: Geschichte – tradition – reflexion, vol 1: Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), pp 405–430; and Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and merkavah mysticism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980).
- 12 See, among many others, Richard A. Horsley, with John S. Hanson, *Bandits, prophets and messiahs: popular movements in the time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985); Albert Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, third edn. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992); John Dominic Crossan, *The historical Jesus: the life of a Mediterranean Jewish peasant* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991); *idem*, *Jesus: a revolutionary biography* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994); R. David Kaylor, *Jesus the prophet: his vision of the kingdom on*

Earth (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the victory of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1996); M. D. Hooker, *The signs of a prophet: the prophetic actions of Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997); and William R. Herzog, *Jesus, justice, and the reign of God* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999).

13 See the discussion by Luke Timothy Johnson in his *Religious experience in earliest Christianity: a missing dimension in New Testament studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), especially, pp 1–37.

14 See Irénée Hausherr, 'Le spiritualité des premières générations chrétiennes', in A. Rivier (ed), *La mystique et les mystiques* (Paris: Desclée, 1965), pp 409–461; Martin Hengel, *The charismatic leader and his followers* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Peter Brown, 'The saint as exemplar in Late Antiquity', *Representations I* (Spring 1983), pp 1–25; Gerard S. Sloyan, *Jesus in focus: a life in its setting* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty Third Publications, 1983); James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: a study of the religious and charismatic experience of Jesus and the first Christians as reflected in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975); Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: a historian's reading of the gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981; original publication, 1973); *idem*, *The religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); *idem*, *The changing faces of Jesus* (New York: Viking Compass/Penguin Putnam, 2000); Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious experience in earliest Christianity*; and Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus: an intimate biography* (New York: Peekamoose Books/Doubleday/Random House, 2000).

15 For a theological perspective, utilizing interdisciplinary resources, see David Granfield, *Heightened consciousness: the mystical difference* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991). For a philosophical and psychological perspective, see Herbert Fingarette, *The self in transformation: psychoanalysis, philosophy and the life of the Spirit* (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

16 See for example Bernard J. F. Lonergan, 'The subject', in W. F. J. Ryan and B. J. Tyrrell (eds), *A second collection* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), pp 69–86; and Louis Dupré, *Transcendent selfhood: the rediscovery of the inner life* (New York: Crossroad Books/The Seabury Press, 1976). Cf Louis Dupré, 'Spiritual life in a secular age', in his *Religious mystery and rational reflection*, pp 131–143.

17 See for example any of the poetry of Rumi, *The ruins of the heart: selected lyric poetry of Jelâluddin Rumi*, translated by Edmund Helminski (Putney, Vermont: Threshold Books, 1981); *The essential Rumi*, translated by Coleman Barks (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1995); or *Rumi: in the arms of the beloved*, translated by Jonathan Star (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1997); the metaphor of intoxication, which is fairly common in Sufism, is less frequent in Christian mysticism. But see the spontaneous reaction of the crowd in Acts 2:13.

18 See William James, *Varieties of religious experience: a study in human nature* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982; originally published in 1902), Lectures VI–X; Mircea Eliade, *Rites and symbols of initiation: the mysteries of birth and rebirth*, translated by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Colophon/Harper & Row, 1975; original publication in English, 1958); Victor Turner, *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969); Thomas M. Finn, *From death to rebirth: ritual and conversion in antiquity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997); and Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster and Meredith Little (eds), *Between and between: patterns of masculine and feminine initiation* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1987).

19 Sebastian Moore, *The crucified Jesus is no stranger* (New York: Crossroad Books/The Seabury Press, 1977), p 11. Moore goes on to discuss the various needed qualifications. William James had his own version of this distinction. See, for example, his *The varieties of religious experience*, Lecture XX, pp 485–519. E. R. Dodds believed that Plotinus was the first theorist of this distinction between the ego and the rest of the psyche. See his 'Tradition and personal achievement in the philosophy of Plotinus', in *The ancient concept of progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp 126–139, at p 135.

20 William James, *The varieties of religious experience*, p 508.

21 See John Cassian, *Conferences*, translated by Colin Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), pp 37–59; quotations from pp 41, 42, 44 and 45. The translation is altered slightly to avoid androcentric language.

22 See the early discussion in Edward Schillebeeckx, 'The Church as a sacrament of dialogue', and 'Church, magisterium and politics', in *God, the future of man*, translated by N. D. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), pp 115–140 and pp 141–166. This theme is taken up again in many subsequent writings. See for example, *On Christian faith: the spiritual, ethical and political dimensions* (New York: Crossroad, 1987).

23 As a way of using words, Jesus' speech about the *basileia* is more like a declaration of love or a solemn promise than like a factual claim about a future event. In other words, its point is not merely to report on something but to make something happen. What happens is that a possible future becomes a possible object of desire in the present moment through Jesus' utterance.

24 See especially, Abraham Heschel, *The prophets*, 2 vols (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) and Walter Brueggemann, *The prophetic imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978). See also, Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A history of prophecy in Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983) and Robert Wilson, *Prophecy and society in ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

25 Evagrius Ponticus, 'Chapters on prayer', no 125, in *The praktikos & chapters on prayer*, translated, with an introduction and notes, by John Eudes Bamberger (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1981), p 76.

26 See the Sequence for Pentecost, 'In our labour, rest most sweet;/Grateful coolness in the heat;/Solace in the midst of woe . . . Bend the stubborn heart and will;/Melt the frozen, warm the chill;/Guide the steps that go astray.' In *The Roman missal: lectionary for mass* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1970), p 135.

27 See Michael O'Callaghan, 'Rahner and Lonergan on foundational theology', in Matthew Lamb (ed), *Creativity and method: essays in honor of Bernard Lonergan, S.J.* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981), pp 123–140.

28 See Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in history and society: toward a practical fundamental theology*, translated by David Smith (New York: Crossroad Books/The Seabury Press, 1980). On Metz, see especially James Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions: mysticism, politics and theology in the work of Johann Baptist Metz* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998). See also Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A theology of liberation: history, politics and salvation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973); on liberation theology as a movement, see Christian Smith, *The emergence of liberation theology: radical religion and social movement theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991). For a thoughtful discussion of Metz and Gutiérrez, along with Karl Rahner and David Tracy, within their different historical and social contexts, see Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the mystery of God: political, liberation and public theologies* (New York: Continuum, 2001).

29 See John W. O'Malley, 'How about some *Christianitas*?', the *BTI* [Boston Theological Institute] *Newsletter* XXVII/18 (February 4 1998).

30 See for example David D. Hall (ed), *Lived religion in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). I am assuming, though I have not discussed them here, that there are three further constitutive dimensions of Catholicism: the sacramental, the intellectual and the institutional, thus adding two, *the sacramental* and *the prophetic*, to Baron von Hügel's famous list of three: institutional, intellectual and mystical.

31 David Tracy, *Dialogue with the other: the inter-religious dialogue* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), pp 82–83.

32 Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The truth shall make you free: confrontations*, translated by Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), p 17.

33 *Ibid.*, p 172.