

THE WAY

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The Way is an international journal of contemporary Christian spirituality, published by the British Jesuits. Through writing informed by critical and creative scholarship, it aims to provide a forum in which thoughtful Christians, from different walks of life and different traditions, reflect on God's continuing action in human experience.

Among particular concerns of **The Way** are:

- the role of spirituality in the struggle for justice
- the spiritual issues raised by intercultural and interreligious dialogue
- the interactions between spirituality, politics and culture
- the fostering and development of the Ignatian spiritual tradition

The Way warmly invites readers to submit articles with a view to publication. They should normally be about 4,000 words long, and be in keeping with the journal's aims. The Editor is always ready to discuss possible ideas. Further details about how to submit an article can be found on **The Way's** website, www.theway.org.uk. The Special Number for July 2004, marking the centenaries of a number of distinguished twentieth century Jesuit theologians, will explore the relationship between the Spiritual Exercises and contemporary theology; contributions on this theme would be especially welcome.

THE SCHOOL OF THE HEART

José A. García

‘THE SCHOOL OF THE HEART’ IS AN IGNATIAN PHRASE. Ignatius used it to describe the final phase of Jesuit formation, now known as the tertianship. His words were *scuela del affecto*.¹ But the phrase applies more widely. Indeed all Ignatius’ writings—the *Reminiscences*, the *Spiritual Exercises*, the *Constitutions*, the letters—are simply a large-scale pedagogy aimed at integrating the heart, a ‘school of the heart’ in which we can learn to receive ourselves totally from God, and to give ourselves totally to God’s Reign.

What follows therefore is not an article about the Jesuit tertianship, about its aims and its methods. My aim, rather, is to trace through Ignatius’ best-known and most widely applicable work, the *Spiritual Exercises*, some of the most basic features of this school, the styles of analysis and therapy that it offers. I shall concentrate particularly on what any of us can recognise as our own, as corresponding with our own desires. Could there ever be a greater yearning in the heart of a believer than that of uniting themselves lovingly and actively with God, not just in the religious context of prayer, but also in the complexities of everyday life?

Integration and Dispersion: Attacking Three Obsessions

It is sacred teaching that we are creatures arising out of God’s love. When this becomes something more than an intellectual belief, something bubbling within us, then a movement of integration towards God begins within the human heart: a movement of confidence, of song, of love, of dedication. ‘From the moment I understood who God is for me, I knew that now I could exist only for God’, said Charles de Foucauld, referring to this basic experience of faith. Whether or not we recognise ourselves in this statement, it points us towards the Christian experience of being God’s creation as daughters and sons of God.

¹ *Constitutions*, V.2.1 [516.4].

In this God-centred vision, objects too cease to be brute facts; they become creatures in the full sense. They too are rooted in God; they too are sacred; they too seek to be drawn into this movement of praise and service of God along with the human person. Humanity cannot simply dispose of them at will.

However, the double movement—of everything coming from God, and seeking to return to God and to be drawn into God's dream for the world—is under threat. From where? From the human heart itself. And the threat spreads across the whole human sphere.

The human heart is the image of God, of a God who is love. As such, it is capable of what is highest and best. It has been gifted with the power to love others in that same love with which God has loved it into being, to love others with a free, generative love. But because the image has been sullied by limitation and sin, the human heart is also capable of what is lowest and basest. It can deny its origins. It can deal with the rest of reality destructively. It can turn its back on God, and live at odds with its central identity.

Experience tells us that this is so. When our hearts are centred in God, when we receive everything from God and live for God, then everything is in place, everything goes well. We are not tempted by things outside us, nor by other people, nor indeed by our own ambiguous selves. Even our most primal instincts are taken up into this current of love received and love given.

But when the heart is de-centred, when it is cut off from its source and therefore also its destiny, when it is in slavery to the devil (a word from Greek roots that signify separation—the devil is whatever separates, splits, disintegrates), then everything begins to fall apart. People and things become nothing but objects of desire; the human self becomes a predator; our basic instincts become tyrannical.

At this point, three obsessions take root. Our survival instinct becomes perverted into an obsession with health and longevity; our possessive instincts become avarice; our self-esteem becomes an obsession about prestige and power. The human heart loses its sense of direction, and its sense of vocation becomes twisted. The things of this world, other people, even the very self, become despots, lording it over our freedom and determining what becomes of us. And so the vacuum which should be God's in the human heart gets filled up with obsessions. No longer are we able to take real decisions about how we spend our lives; instead we are mortal victims of our dividedness.

What brings about such a brutal rupture, such a travesty in the human heart—a travesty that, tragically, lies at the root of all humanity's ills? In Ignatius' vision, humanity is marked both by God's grace and by human malice and ignorance. But there is nothing new here. What is really interesting is how Ignatius saw the way out of this situation, how we can overcome the state of alienation into which ignorance and guilt plunge us. Here the classroom metaphor becomes significant: what are the school exercises, as it were, that we have to do in order to reorientate our hearts towards God and reintegrate them once again? What are the lessons that we must study and learn? I think there are basically three, and I shall describe each in turn.

Lesson 1: Salvation and Sin

'What do you know of salvation, you who have never sinned?' In these words, Bernanos attacked a pharisaical version of Christianity, which believed itself to be created in purity and not to need salvation. Bernanos and Ignatius are at one here. The reintegration of the heart begins with the experience of grace, even within the experience of sin.

The first lesson that we learn in the school of the Exercises is, as we have said, that all things find their home in God—in whom 'we live and move and have our being', as Luke's Paul, quoting pagan authorities, put the matter in Athens (Acts 17:28). The first lesson is that of God's original project for humanity and for each of us. In the beginning was not only the Word, but also grace, this grace.

But as soon as those receiving the Exercises begin to look at themselves and at the world, they see at once that things are not like this. What calls the shots in the self and its world is not grace but sin, not communion but division, not peace with oneself and with God but discord. Why? What has happened in the world to bring about this enormous perversion of God's original plan?

'You too are guilty' is what must be learnt at this stage. For all his pupils, all who receive his Exercises, Ignatius seeks to undermine their complacency. The world is not simply a story of goodies and baddies out there, but rather an all-embracing *history*—a history including evil—in which we are all involved. Then Ignatius undermines our tendency to see our own behaviour in private, subjective terms. Sin is not confined to the individual conscience, to the sphere of its personal relationship with God. It is public, cosmic. It has specifiable, measurable effects in

the world, in the Church, in the self. It is morally evil and aesthetically ugly.

But when Ignatius the teacher removes the ground from under his pupil, his purpose is not to leave them exposed, without any support at all. His concern, rather, is for the person to seek a new support: not their good deeds, or even their self-hatred dressed up as penance. His hope is that they will deepen their sense of being a creature arising from the love of God, and thus come to see themselves also as a sinner, welcomed and accepted in mercy even when guilt has ruptured their communion with God. The drama of our estrangement from God, the drama of the world's exile from God, is always framed within the divine goodness, within God's suffering for us, within God's call to return to communion.

Entering into this experience is in a radical sense heart-breaking. Such goodness as a response to such estrangement, such love and suffering (the crucifixion is a symbol of both of these) as an answer to the evil we have inflicted! It is at this point that we can understand better what Bernanos meant. Only a person who knows themselves as a sinner knows anything at all about salvation; only this person can recognise the crucified Jesus as their saviour. A person who has not experienced their own sinfulness knows nothing about salvation. They lack this basic experience.

***A heart-breaking
experience***

What is really important here is a sense of gratitude. It is gratitude which brings about the reorientation of the heart, sets it on the pathway back to God, and begins the reintegration of the potential within. Gratitude is the human key to the Ignatian school of the heart. Thus it is also the most frequent lesson given in the Ignatian school, and the most important for our progress. The deeper its gratitude, the more the heart will be integrated in God. If the sense of gratitude is weak, there will be little desire for God, and little integration in God. But then, how can we be anything but grateful when confronted with the double revelation Christ brings us: that of being both creatures loved by God, and sinners loved and welcomed into God's mercy?

The process ends in a moment of acknowledgment and of questioning: 'Thank you, Lord, for such love, for such goodness, for such acceptance. What can I do with you and for you?' The heart is fully centred; it becomes filled with gratitude and joy; it prepares itself to pass back to God and to others the love that it has received, a love that emerges from us and is truly ours, but which has its origin prior to

us, in the Other. One of my friends calls this love satellite-love—a satellite which orbits God's own love.

Lesson 2: Generosity and Perversion

Then we come to a second lesson, one that is both important and difficult to learn: 'There are deceitful things which look like the truth—that is what makes them attractive'. For Ignatius, the human problem is not so much one of malice as of ignorance. Or, to put it another way, much of our malice derives from our ignorance and our lack of clarity about the deceits with which the Evil One entraps us.

It is striking that within four days of the First Week experience—that is, on the fourth day of the Second Week—Ignatius puts the brake on the process of gospel contemplation. Ruthlessly, abruptly, he damps down our enthusiasm about following the Lord. Why this sudden halt? Why suspect so blatantly that our following of the Lord, so personal and so new, could be based on false premises, on lies that look like truth?

At this point, we are encountering one of Ignatius's most telling intuitions about the nature of the human heart, and about how the heart can be deceived by the 'devil' under the appearance of truth and goodness. For Ignatius, the first and greatest temptation of the human heart is the 'desire for riches'. He does not tell us why he thinks this; he takes it as his starting point. What he does say is that the human person, once entrapped in this desire, starts to build ladders above (or below!), first in search of prestige and power, then towards pride, and finally towards all the other vices (Exx 142). By setting his famous meditation on Two Standards in the context of the following of Christ, Ignatius is saying that this death-dealing process occurs among those who are actively following Christ, as well as among those who are not. This is possible only if we are being deceived, only if we are taking to be true what is actually a lie in disguise.

We can imagine the human heart as made up of fine material and black holes. The fine material is its capacity for love, its readiness for communion, its openness to the transcendent; it is, as we should never forget, created in the image and likeness of God. The black holes result from its creaturely limitations, and also from sin. They are called insecurity, fear, lack of confidence, vulnerability to illness, fear of the future, ultimately the fear of death. How can we avoid these great

wounds in the psyche, this wretchedness of heart, this fundamental insecurity?

A first answer to that question seems to be embedded in the anxiety itself: a false answer, but one that appears to be true, and can therefore deceive us and trap us so easily. 'It is riches that can calm and assuage the anxiety that brings about insecurity and fear for the future. If we can manage to surround ourselves with many good things—be these material goods like money, or more intangible goods such as personal qualities or learning—then this will put an end to our insecurity, fear and anxiety.' So goes this first, natural response.

It is quite normal to think like this, and this all too persuasive logic leads many people astray. Nevertheless, it is no more than a trap, a trap with both short-term and long-term consequences. Fear provokes instincts of survival and possessiveness that stop at nothing and nobody. Our experience of ourselves and of others teaches us this all too well. But the deceit is not obvious.

Ignatius saw clearly that the heart which has fallen victim to this desire for riches inevitably comes to be dependent on what other people think. Thus it seeks, at all costs, 'the empty honour of the world', in ways that lead to oppression and arrogance. But it is the destructive version of the possessive instinct that lies at the root.

So much for the description of this process. What is the cure? The Ignatian school of the heart puts forward two major exercises aimed at curing this mortal disease. The first is to become aware of the deceit—the prayer for the grace to know 'the deceits of the evil chief' and for 'help to keep myself from them' (Exx 139.1). This lesson is about clarity of vision, and it becomes more and more necessary the more we acquire riches of various sorts: intelligence, training, institutions. These are not evil in themselves; they can be of service to others and to God's Reign, indeed they can be new ways of serving Christ as an apostle. The deceit occurs when our hearts come to be dependent on such riches. Then they cease to be ways in which the Reign of God comes into being, and become idols of one's own heart. It is to them that we begin to look for salvation, and not to God. We fall victim to a practical atheism.

***Becoming aware
of the deceit***

The second exercise in this lesson also confronts the heart through the head. We ask for 'knowledge of the true life that the supreme and true captain shows us, and for grace to imitate him' (Exx 139.2). The hope is that in seeing contrasts—rebel chief and true captain, deceits

and true life—the mind and heart should make a decision for Christ Jesus. And not just for any old Christ, for the Christ whom I imagine in accordance with my desires, but for the Christ of the gospels, for the Christ who is poor, humble and humiliated, for the crucified one. If this is my deepest desire, born out of personal love for the Lord, my heart will yearn for identification with Christ more than for anything else. If I have to use particular kinds of wealth, personal or institutional, these will no longer be a temptation, but rather means of greater service. This attraction that Christ exerts over my heart will come to neutralise my disordered attachments, and create in me a ‘pure heart’. Indeed, the love of Christ can come to be so deep and personal within me that I come to desire a life like his: poor, humble, humiliated. Just for itself. Just because I want to identify with him.

When I do this exercise, what happens to my black holes? They remain present, but the Lord is now in charge of my heart, with a therapeutic presence and peace. The peace of the risen Christ, alive and present in my life, loved above all things, is what neutralises the fear that gives rise to possessiveness and all its disastrous short-term and long-term consequences. If fear leaves us, we can moderate our desires and claims. Dreams of power and happiness cease to seduce us. ‘Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid’ (Matthew 14:27).

Lesson 3: Action from the Heart

‘What matters is that the world should touch the heart and that the *heart* should go out towards the world’: this is the third and final lesson. This exercise seeks to bring about an authentic miracle: that of bringing the world into the very centre—not just the periphery—of our own being, and of sending us wholeheartedly out into the world. Let me explain.

The human self is complex. Though individual, my heart is surrounded, as it were, by three concentric circles. The circle furthest from the centre is that of the senses: my self in so far as it sees, hears, tastes, touches. Next comes my intelligence: my self in so far as it thinks, makes connections, moves from one thing to another. Then there is the sphere of the affections, arousing feelings and subject to the emotional influence of others. But at the pure centre there is the heart itself, in which all the other manifestations are rooted. Here the self’s true liberty is to be found; here too the Spirit of God seeks to enter us

and to shape us. Obviously these levels are richly connected and affect each other all the time, forming a rich unity. Nevertheless, they also have a certain autonomy in their interaction.

This way of looking at the self is obviously crude and oversimplified, but can help us understand two things. Firstly: material things, other people, and the external world can reach the very centre of the self, the heart. They can affect who we are; they can move us interiorly; they can mobilise us into action. Or, by contrast, they can remain, as it were, intercepted, at one of the more superficial levels of the self—senses, intelligence, affections—without reaching the centre. Second, and conversely: our self can deal with external reality either from its heart or else from one of the other levels.

What makes the difference here? Obviously the extent to which the self is fully integrated as it encounters the world, whether as perceiver or as agent. If the world can reach my heart—the source of all thoughts, feelings and decisions—then my whole self, not just a part of it, is affected by the world. And when I act for the world out of my heart, then the world receives the whole, integrated reality which is myself, not just a part of it.

What does the Ignatian school of the heart have to say about all this? What exercises does it have to offer in order to foster this double spiritual movement? Let me make three suggestions as a way of concluding this article.

Contemplative Vision

If we read the world in a God-centred way, as suggested earlier, then the external world is not just a set of brute facts. It is made up of gifts, people and things in whom and in which the Giver dwells. God is in things; God gives them to us; God gives us God's own self in them, dwelling in them, working in them, descending to them (Exx 234-237). If that is so, then how can I confine them, when they impinge on me, simply at the level of the senses, of the mind, or of the emotions? They are holy and sacred, dwelt in by God; through them God's own self is loving me, calling me. I cannot but take them into my deepest centre so as to strike up a fruitful dialogue with them, and with God. My heart itself has to be involved in receiving the reality through which God is approaching me thus. God is seeking to dwell in the centre of the human self, not just on its surface.

The Ignatian school invites us to maintain a constant contemplative gaze on the real, a wide-ranging, loving regard for things in general. It acknowledges things, events and persons for what they are, but then recognises—re-cognises—they as living sacraments of God's presence and closeness in our lives. When we see everything as a gift, we are flooded with gratitude and desire. At the same time, we have no fear of breaking the iron bonds that hold the self as prisoner of its own interests. We can 'take leave of our self-love, desire and interest' (Exx 189.10) in our encounter with the world, in a movement of pure love, like that of God, free of distortions.

The Conversion of Sensibility

However, this kind of contemplative gaze depends—far more than we would like to believe—on our senses. We only approach things by seeing them, listening to them, touching them, smelling them, tasting them. Obviously our hearts are dependent on the senses if external reality is to impinge on us; but it is equally true that what we call our contemplation can only happen through the senses.

**We must learn
to experience
reality as
Jesus did**

We are all too well aware that our sensory filters are anything but innocent. We see things, listen to things, taste things in ways that are shaped by our own prior interests, and the same applies to the other senses as well. Our channels of perception and action need to be evangelized, therefore. If we want to look at reality as the Lord does, if we want reality to touch us, move us and inspire us as it did Jesus, we must learn to sense it as he did. We must gradually acquire a sensibility similar to that of the human Jesus, for whom all things, especially what was being abused, formed a *milieu divin*, a place of adoration, of encounter, and of service to God. He felt no need to use them as protection barriers for the self's distorting interests.

We must beware of conversions that are simply 'interior': experience tells us that they are not conversions at all. The unity of the human self expresses itself externally; its interiority is accessible through the different levels of its activity. Hence we can hardly speak of a converted person if the conversion has not permeated to every level. This would imply that the various levels were operating in complete independence.

Ignatius was aware intuitively of this problem and wanted to deal with it head-on. Only when my senses look at things, hear them, touch

them, smell them, in the same way as Jesus' senses did, will the reactions of my heart to what I experience resemble his. Before that stage, while I am still relying on my supposed 'interior' conversion, I can never be confident that my reaction to reality is truly Christian. In the specifics of everyday life, the majority of my decisions—those which make up the texture of my existence—will be made only at the level of the senses, not at that of the heart. Thus any authentic conversion to the Lord—any conversion that makes a difference to real life and is not just something we think about or want to happen—involves an ever growing conformity of our senses to those of the Lord. Prior to that stage, anything can happen. We are always something more than what we say that we want or think—however much this may challenge our innate narcissism.

Ignatius thought that the conversion of our sensibility to that of the Lord emerged from two kinds of exercise. It could be nourished by the wondering, grateful, loving contemplation of the mysteries of Christ's life; it could also emerge from a progressive forgetfulness of ourselves, leading us to dedicate ourselves to others. That was the price that had to be paid for the grace of seeing God in everything—as opposed to the habit of turning God into an object of our heart's acquisitiveness.



‘What the eye sees, the heart feels’, to quote a Spanish proverb. But the converse is also true: ‘what the heart does not feel, the eye does not see’. The different levels of the self are interconnected; they are not sealed compartments. The gospels often tell us of Jesus being moved in his guts; but such expressions are frequently preceded by verbs such as ‘see’, ‘move’, ‘go out to meet’, ‘disembark’. And conversely: only from this gut-level of compassion can Jesus address people deeply, see them in their full depth: ‘Woman, how great is your faith’ (Matthew 15:28); ‘Go in peace; your faith has saved you’ (Luke 7:50).

Progress is Possible

People whose senses and feelings are thus conformed to the Lord model what it is to be integrated. They are, in the end, miracles. Each day, such a person is growing in familiarity with God through whatever they do, in the quality that is both the basis and the goal of any apostolic spirituality. At the end of his life, Ignatius used to say that his life had been one of continual growth in ‘this devotion’.

Are we dealing here with something that is humanly impossible? Often it seems like that, but there are perhaps two facts which suggest the opposite. Firstly, there are real people, real women and men, who seem to live just like this. God and the Gospel seem to have become part of them, a kind of atmosphere which surrounds them—and this shows itself in everything they do, in their whole lives. They are at peace; they are centred; they are integrated; they are constantly open to the needs of others; God shines through them. Secondly, something happens as we get older and the surfaces of things confuse us less. We begin to suspect, and then to feel, that the grace of God is on offer and available for us too—a growing attunement to God that enables us to see everything with the divine eyes and the divine heart. Why not just accept it, instead of remaining paralyzed by our scepticism about such possibilities?

We began by speaking of three obsessions which grip the human heart when we draw on sources other than those of God, and orientate ourselves to a Kingdom other than God’s Kingdom. Then we went on to discuss the perennial, elusive temptation that leads us to try to solve the insecurities and fears within ourselves by following the acquisitive drives within our hearts. Finally, we have shown how difficult it is to

live in the world from our very hearts, and conversely to let the world actually enter our hearts. At every point I have tried to explain how the Ignatian school offers human therapies that heal the self's diseases. For we were right in claiming that it is not malice which is the central problem, but ignorance. That is why, in greater or lesser measure, we all need to pass, year after year, through the *scuela del affecto*, the school of the heart.

José A. García SJ has been for several years director of the Spanish pastoral review *Sal Terrae*, where an earlier version of this essay appeared in June 2000, as well as being chair of the editorial board for *Manresa*, the Spanish sister journal of *The Way*. He is also responsible for the Jesuit tertianship in Spain.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Cross-Cultural Spiritual Direction

Theresa Utschig

IN RECENT YEARS, HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS has become more globalised. Globalisation is not simply an economic reality. The increased ease of travel and the new resources of the internet have opened up seemingly unlimited new possibilities for exploring the limits of the self and the perennial questions of human existence. Nowhere is this more evident than in places like Taizé in France, where large numbers of young people gather in an environment that encourages them to express such questions.

I write as a member of one of the religious congregations of women that help to welcome the young people at Taizé, and accompany many of them on their spiritual journeys. I have been privileged to witness how the new and unique pastoral situation has generated new styles of spiritual direction. These draw both on classic scenarios and patterns of spiritual direction, and go beyond them. Moreover, the cultural and linguistic mix throws up interesting questions about the nature of spiritual accompaniment.

Conventionally, cross-cultural spiritual direction, and cross-cultural ministry in general, is thought of in terms either of missiology or of the care of immigrants. Here, one of the two people is engaged in a significant way in the culture of the other, and has taken perhaps considerable steps to meet the other person within their own cultural context. But what happens when the two people do not share, to any great extent, a common cultural milieu, when neither person participates significantly in the other's cultural inheritance? When, for example, a Korean is accompanying an English person in the Congo, or a Slovenian is accompanying a Thaiander in Taizé? Here the dynamics are different. What does it mean to accompany someone in such a situation? As the world becomes more interdependent, and as people from different cultures meet each other with increasing frequency, the Church will find itself confronted with more and more pastoral

situations involving issues of cross-cultural dynamics. Reflection on cross-cultural spiritual direction at Taizé allows a glimpse into how this type of relationship could develop in the Church as a whole.

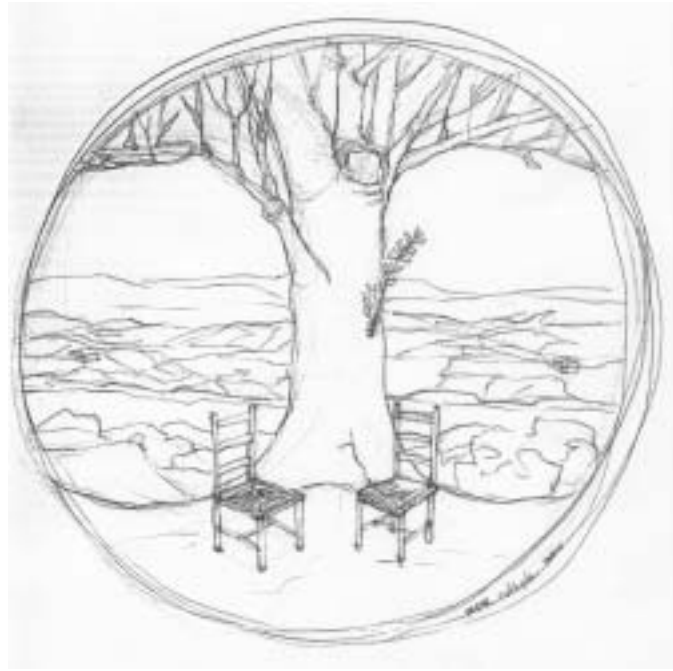
The rapid development of the ministry of spiritual direction in the last four decades has opened up many possible ways for understanding how people might be accompanied on their spiritual journey. A word that well evokes the nature of this ministry is the French *l'accompagnement*, which connotes listening as well as simply accompanying. Spiritual direction as accompaniment focuses on the direction in which the one being accompanied is moving in their relationship with God. While spiritual direction can involve formally arranged sessions and a stipend, it can often also be—as at Taizé—less structured in terms of time and place (though arguably no less rigorous in its discipline). Listening to the person being accompanied can involve any of several roles, as required by the nuances of the relationship and the affective movements within the person.¹ The classic terms ‘director’ and ‘directee’,² though indicating a more hierarchical form of the relationship, are still in current use despite their limitations. I shall use them here, though spiritual direction will be understood primarily in terms of listening, and I shall also sometimes refer to ‘accompaniment’.

Spiritual direction in the Christian tradition takes place within the context of the Christian community, and in a form sanctioned by the wisdom of that community. An individual is given space in which to express their yearning for God. For a person to be able to talk to someone about their relationship with God, an environment must already be prepared wherein such a conversation is possible.

The felt need for spiritual direction arises, in response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, within a particular context, within a situation that recognises the value of such a need and fosters its growth.

¹ These terms are taken from standard contemporary works on spiritual accompaniment: Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992), pp. 42-83 and 84-112; Carolyn Gratton ‘The Ministry of Spiritual Guidance’, *The Way Supplement*, 91 (1998), pp. 17-27; André Louf, *Tuning in to Grace* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992), pp. 78-108; Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: Spiritual Direction in the Modern World*, new revised edition (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1994), p. 45; and André Louf, ‘Spiritual Fatherhood in the Literature of the Desert’, in *Abba: Guides to Wholeness and Holiness in East and West*, edited by John R. Sommerfeldt (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1982), pp. 37-63.

² See Janet Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings* (London: St Paul’s, 2000), and William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982).



Angela Utschig, A Safe Space in Burgundy

At Taizé most of the young people who come are students, and most will be searching for something in their lives. For many of them, some form of 'God' will be present, whether or not they are able to articulate exactly who God is. Many are profoundly moved, or given a 'shock to the senses', by what they find in Taizé—the austere beauty of the surroundings; the lack of clutter; the welcome; the encounter with other young people who are searching; the respect for each person; the absence of the media; the absence of materialism; the unorganised space; the simple life. For many, the time of silence during each of the common prayers (about ten minutes) provides access to a deep place in themselves that questions them. Taizé is an environment conducive to 'openness' that allows space for each person's inner life. Many say they feel 'at home' there, or that they consider it their 'home'.³ The people who come usually arrive with a question; and frequently something very profound happens in the person, either during their time in Taizé or afterwards. The work of effective listening is an interior discipline involving humility and respect for the one being accompanied, as well as a deep sense of dependence on God. What follows are some reflections on the nature of cross-cultural spiritual accompaniment

³ Though Taizé is in France it cannot be associated with any particular culture.

based on my own experience of being accompanied, as well as of accompanying, in situations like that of Taizé. I am not going to arrive at a systematic or comprehensive description of companioning in such a context, but I shall raise questions, and point to areas for further exploration.

Qualities of the Director—Welcome and Presence

Most current spiritual direction takes place between people who are engaged in the same cultural context. In cross-cultural accompaniment, the director clearly needs to be familiar with the cultural presuppositions out of which the directee is operating, in order better to respond to the nuances of the directee's narrative. Many directors working in cross-cultural direction situations are working with several directees from the same type of cultural background, and are able to develop a familiarity with these cultural manifestations and how they influence the directees' ways of relating. However, in cross-cultural accompaniment it is also possible that a person's spirit can find direction even when the director is almost completely unfamiliar with the directee's background.⁴

How the director welcomes the directee will certainly help set the tone for their time together.⁵ When the director is unfamiliar with the culture of the directee, the directee may need a certain gracefulness in order to put up with the clumsiness of the director. The director in these cases will be advised to follow the lead of the directee. (For example, to greet each other, should the two shake hands? Bow? Nod? Kiss on one cheek? Two? Should the director avoid touching the directee? How much space should be left between them as they walk together? Talk together? How much eye contact should be made?)

Cultural expectations are only one aspect of a very complicated exchange between the two people. Much will depend on the mood of the directee (which may be affected by the weather, the time of year,

⁴ From within the context of group discernment Peter Bisson asks whether it is possible for spiritual consolation to happen in a group without prior communication on the level of culture. This question parallels my own as to whether spiritual direction can take place where the director is unfamiliar with the directee's culture. See Peter Bisson, 'Cultural Conversion and Cross-Cultural Communication: A Basis for Communal Discernment', *The Way Supplement*, 85 (Spring 1996), pp. 55-61.

⁵ Susan Rakoczy, 'Unity, Diversity, and Uniqueness: Foundations of Cross-Cultural Spiritual Direction', in *Common Journey, Different Paths: Spiritual Direction in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, edited by Susan Rakoczy (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), pp. 9-23, here p. 18. Other articles in this collection have also nourished the present article, notably those by Marina Herrera and Padraic Leonard.

their body, their health, a situation they encountered on the way to the session . . .); the issues they are currently dealing with (or not); and their personal expectations, real or perceived (of the director, self, the conversation, the Church, community, and so on). It is important to be aware of these influential factors. A good rule of thumb is that one should give more weight than normal to body-language, gesture, and actions on the part of the directee, and leave more space for them to think. An openness of mind and spirit to the state of the directee will go a long way toward enabling the directee to have an open attitude toward herself and toward God.

The directee is unique, unlike any previous person

The director must be careful not to project their own motivations onto the directee, and be wary of trying to define the directee according to the director's own structure of directee is unique, unlike any previous person. They have their own life story, experiences, personality, emotional responses, level of intellectual development, sense of humour, appreciation of beauty, ways of relating to people, openness to the world, sensitivity to new things, depth of woundedness. One is on 'holy ground' in an encounter with a directee.⁶ While the directee is in some sense a product of their cultural heritage, they are always more than cultural stereotypes would allow. Though they may be deeply engaged with their culture, each person is a unique child of God, and can only be encountered as such. It can sometimes take a great deal of courage not to speak, and to let the directee articulate in their own manner and in their own time what they need to express. Particularly in a cross-cultural situation, directors might find themselves needing to withhold judgement, or to refrain from expressing the judgement they have formed until a later time. Reverie, a treasuring and pondering in the heart (Luke 2:19), involves a cognitive suspension in order that the experience to can be taken in on another level of being. It can take courage and endurance to let emotions stay at the surface without attempting to analyze them or even to formulate any thoughts around them. This kind of 'holding back' on a certain subject, gesture or attitude might even last over several sessions, and can provide the directee with a 'container' to hold what is happening.⁷

⁶ Rakoczy, 'Unity, Diversity, and Uniqueness', p. 17.

⁷ In the field of counselling, containment as capacity for transformation involves bearing the unbearable for the other. This gives the other a space in which to allow a deeply painful issue or experience to be

Much of what the director 'does' can best be described with the word 'presence'. Susan Rakoczy indicates that in order to be present to the directee, the director must be equally present to herself on their own cultural journey.⁸ The director is present to the directee, and present to the action of the Holy Spirit in the directee. Presence implies receptivity: a receptivity to the spoken and unspoken expressions of the directee. At the same time it implies activity: an attentiveness to the being of the directee, and an active listening that is awake to nuances. Presence usually entails suffering, being with the directee in their struggle for liberation in God. People from cultures that stress 'being' over 'doing' will have not only more understanding of what presence entails, but perhaps also have higher expectations in this regard. If director and directee are both from cultures where the *modus operandi* is 'doing', it might take a more concerted effort to recognise the necessity and the benefits of being with the other through a process.

All good spiritual accompaniment requires the person accompanying to have a great deal of self-knowledge, as well as to be open to the transformation they might undergo in the process of listening to the directee. The director also needs to be honest about their own personal issues, so as to be able to avoid imposing them on the directee.⁹ Clearly, the more interior freedom the director has, the more they will be able to be present to the directee. The more authentic the director is, in the sense of being responsible for their reactions, the more this will encourage the directee to have a similar attitude. Because of the potential for miscommunication in cross-cultural spiritual direction, these qualities in a director take on a heightened importance. Good spiritual direction will be enhanced by attention to cultural issues and questions, even in cases where the two people share a common cultural inheritance.

The director will need to have a sense of how they are perceived by the directee, since transference can take on different forms in a cross-cultural direction situation. The directee might expect something from the director, consciously or unconsciously, or might need something

transformed. See Marilyn Miller-Pietroni, 'Containment in Theory and Practice', *Psychodynamic Counselling*, 5 (1999), pp. 407-427.

⁸ Rakoczy, 'Unity, Diversity, and Uniqueness', p. 19.

⁹ For a discussion of how the woundedness of healers can be devastating in relationships dealing with the spiritual aspect of a person, see Demaris Wehr, 'Spiritual Abuse: When Good People Do Bad Things', in *The Psychology of Mature Spirituality: Integrity, Wisdom, Transcendence*, edited by Polly Young-Eisendrath and Melvin Miller (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 47-61.

from the director (affirmation, challenge, non-responsiveness); they might be unconsciously pushing the director to respond in a certain way. The directee might be afraid of something in the director, or read a situation or a particular response in the wrong way, or assume the wrong context for a remark. A directee tends subtly to adjust their narrative according to what they understand the director feels to be of value, or according to the topics of conversation pursued or not pursued by the director.¹⁰ A directee's way of relating to their director may (or may not) be linked to their image of God.

Above all, the director does well to pray before and during a session,¹¹ as well as afterwards. An attitude of prayer will enable the director to listen in the way that the cross-cultural situation requires, with sensitivity to differences of all kinds: language, culture, belief systems, values, social context, and so on.

Qualities of the Directee—Openness and Trust

Being accompanied by a person from another cultural context can require a certain amount of courage, particularly as there is a greater risk that such accompaniment will bear little or no fruit, or even have a negative impact. A directee inexperienced in cross-cultural situations might not be aware, at the outset, of the extra effort that such a conversation involves, or of the amount of patience and forgiveness required. They will need consciously and explicitly to approach each spiritual direction session in a spirit of openness. They might also need to make an extra effort at clarity, especially in terms of images and cultural references, realising that there will be some things that simply cannot be communicated outside one's own cultural context. Because of the potential for miscommunication (including misreading of verbal cues or body language), cross-cultural spiritual direction has its own special frustrations, but it can also (in many respects) be especially rewarding, both for the directee and the director. In my experience, it is also possible for good to result from misunderstanding or non-understanding.

In addition to the normal process of becoming accustomed to a director, a directee in a situation of cross-cultural direction will have to

¹⁰ On the director's resistance to the directee or their religious experience, see Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings*, p. 46.

¹¹ Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings*, p. 48.

pass through what Peter Bisson describes as the phases of 'cultural shock'.¹² These are phases encountered by any person in a new situation, but are most easily recognised as those by which a person comes to terms with the strangeness of another culture. An initial euphoria is followed by a phase of confusion and criticism. This provokes either defence against a perceived threat (rejection) or else appreciation and enjoyment of the new culture (welcome). Bisson's insights on cross-cultural communal discernment are useful in understanding some of the processes involved in cross-cultural spiritual direction. Among the ways to bridge the cultural gap, Bisson lists friendship, good will, good group process, common faith (common religious vocation and charism), and common work.¹³

A directee in front of a foreign director will need to assess how the director is hearing what they say, and to monitor whether the director's reactions are in line with what they are trying to express. It may be that the director will sometimes act purely out of their own cultural presuppositions, and proceed on something in a manner that the directee fails to understand. Any internal contradiction or confusion experienced by the directee because of this will be resolved either positively (acceptance) or negatively (rejection), or else left unresolved for a period of time. The directee needs to be comfortable with the ambiguity of a cross-cultural situation.

The directee will also need to be continually reflecting on how well the relationship is functioning. They must be willing to end the relationship if it ceases to be life-giving, even if they are unable to articulate how this has occurred. Directees come into the relationship of spiritual direction with certain expectations, of themselves, of the director, of the session, and of God—expectations which they may or may not be able to put into words. Movements of consolation or desolation may be less clear in a cross-cultural context, because it is more difficult to articulate the factors involved. Negative dynamics in the relationship might include the directee doing something unconsciously to please the director as someone perceived to be in authority (for example following certain religious practices that they know would satisfy the director). This might be complicated in a cross-

¹² Peter Bisson, 'Cultural Conversion and Cross-Cultural Communication: A Basis for Communal Discernment', *The Way Supplement*, 85 (Spring 1996), pp. 55-61.

¹³ It is interesting that all of these ways of bridging cultural gaps are employed as a matter of course in Taizé.

cultural situation by the directee's trying to meld elements of their own tradition with those of another culture (a Western young person practising elements from the Eastern spiritual traditions, or an immigrant trying to fit in with the dominant culture). Any one of these situations might cause the directee to feel that they are not being understood, or bring about a situation where they are unable to be open with the director.

***Every culture
understands and
practises care in
a different way***

Though a spiritual direction relationship cannot be confused with therapy, what the directee expects by way of care will also be part of the spiritual direction dynamic. Every culture understands and practises care in a slightly different way.¹⁴ For the directee, the director can tangibly represent God's care, and their expectations of God's care can influence their expectations of the director. A director who senses anxiety on the part of the directee might explore these questions. It might be possible to arrive together at a more reasonable set of expectations, or to separate the directee's expectations of God from the directee's expectations of the director.

Reflections on the Relationship between Director and Directee

The mysterious other to be welcomed in spiritual accompaniment—in Christian understanding, a unique child of God—can appear even more mysterious because of the cultural presuppositions out of which they are operating. The spiritual direction relationship will be viable only if the director has a positive attitude towards different cultures. If by 'other' they understand 'alien', then they will view the other as a discrete entity. Such a relationship will not be a forum for dialogue, but rather an occasion for imparting truth, advice, counsel, or knowledge from one person to the other. This is not to say that faith cannot be strengthened in this situation, and that the directee cannot make real progress in their relationship with God. For it to be viable, however, both people need to accept the situation as normative, and be willing to work within the limitations (and richness) of such a worldview. If, on the other hand, the other is viewed not as a discrete entity but as a dynamic reality, their 'otherness' will become the occasion—and

¹⁴ Zack Eleftheriadou, *Transcultural Counselling* (London: Central Book Publishing, 1994), p. 40.

source—of dialogue.¹⁵ In this case, a determined effort will usually provide ample points of entry into their unique interpretation of the world, revealing how the other's God-narrative relates to their conception of themselves and their relationship with others.¹⁶ A conversation between two people who are really 'other' to each other can have the effect of enabling both parties to go beyond themselves, and to begin to understand what it is to relate to God who is completely Other. It is in the encounter with the foreign that we can begin to deal with the strangeness of God.

Cross-cultural spiritual direction conversations may take place in one of several languages, depending on the competences of both the director and directee. If there is an equal choice, it is preferable that the directee chooses in which language to converse. The choice might indicate that the directee's theological and spiritual vocabulary is richer in a certain language, or that the language itself is endowed with a vocabulary that the directee needs in order to express their thoughts. A choice of one language over another could also indicate a conscious decision to distance herself from the director, or from the subject matter, in the attempt to look at something more objectively. Or it could be an attempt to avoid an encounter with a certain subject that was experienced within a particular linguistic context. Speaking in a language other than their original language might also enhance the directee's sense of encountering the other, or express their need to go beyond current internally established boundaries and parameters. In some cases, it might be necessary for each person to speak in their original language at a certain point in the conversation, in order to clarify a particular topic. Though this can be difficult for both parties, it can enable the two to understand each other more clearly.

Spiritual realities may be difficult to articulate, and gestures, body language, tone of voice, pitch, volume, inflection, pace, pauses, emphases, silence, glances, and facial expressions are all involved in

¹⁵ Sandra Schneiders points out the alienation that results from the postmodern awareness that metanarratives are limited and relative. In contrast to the imperialistic attempt to bridge the cultural gap by subsuming the other into one's own metanarrative, accessing the other by way of dialogue allows each person to retain their integrity. See Sandra M. Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), pp. 112-115.

¹⁶ From a postmodern standpoint, Paul Lakeland suggests that encountering the other is made possible only by the recognition of a certain degree of similarity of experience. Dialogue then enables us to make connections with our own symbolic systems and understanding of reality. See Paul Lakeland, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), pp. 84 ff.

their communication. Grammar is also important, especially in a language that director or directee does not know well—unusual constructions may merely indicate lack of knowledge, but they can also express a subtle point that should not be missed. It can happen that in spite of communication difficulties, prejudice, problems of adaptation, and general incomprehension, the directee has a need to speak to a certain director at this particular time, even though (or possibly because) that director is from another culture. Perhaps the directee needs to grapple with the mystery of foreign-ness, or finds psychological breathing space in the fact that the director requires explanations for things that someone in their own culture might take for granted. Perhaps there is a certain cultural complementarity, where gaps or deficiencies in the directee's culture are compensated by things found in the director's culture. Or it is possible that there is something in the personalities of the two of them that just 'clicks' so that the directee feels free to unburden something only to this particular person at this particular time.

It is generally easier to understand and to be understood by someone from one's own cultural background. The possibilities for racism and prejudice in cross-cultural relationships are real and subtle.¹⁷ Everyone has had negative experiences with people who were different from them, and reactions can surface in the spiritual direction relationship that can be very surprising to both people.¹⁸ Even emulation of the person or an idealization of aspects of their culture can be detrimental.¹⁹ The other person can be perceived as immature, simply because their ways of processing and articulating information are different. If transference or counter-transference occurs as a result, it will be best to acknowledge and name the situation openly. This will at least signal the existence of the problem, or indicate that there was a problem of this type in the past which has resonance with what is

¹⁷ See Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings*, pp. 44-49 for a description of the resistance of the directee to the director, and, perhaps more debilitating, on the part of the director toward the directee.

¹⁸ For a discussion of three mechanisms typically used to cope with differentness (compliance, aggression, and avoidance), see Carolyn Gratton, *Guidelines for Spiritual Direction* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1980), pp. 139-142. See also Eleftheriadou, *Transcultural Counselling*, pp. 32-33 for how the behaviour of the other person is often read (and diagnosed) from within one's own cultural filters, or in terms of stereotypes.

¹⁹ See Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings*, pp. 165 ff, for a look at mild to severe positive and negative transference.

happening in the current situation. It also enables both director and directee to make the decision as to whether this is an insurmountable barrier in their relationship.

In situations of cross-cultural spiritual direction, people generally require a longer time to settle in, and more energy will generally be spent on getting to know each other. Comment on the director's situation is kept to a minimum, to allow the directee as much freedom as possible in the expression of their experience and life. It may be difficult to maintain the balance between taking the time needed to establish a relationship of trust on the one hand, and the desire of the directee to talk about what is important on the other. Both processes can either go too fast or too slowly, causing discomfort in the relationship. There are stages that must be passed through in any relationship that is built upon trust. Both parties need to have the desire to be there and make the relationship work. Both people must bear goodwill toward each other and have fundamental respect for the other person and where they are at in their life at the present (without this necessarily being the subject of the conversation). Particularly in a cross-cultural situation, this ability to give the other person space to be themselves is of paramount importance, even though it might be difficult to determine what really gives the person this freedom. What a person from one culture finds freeing, a person from another might find oppressive. Then again, cross-cultural relationships are particularly susceptible to erosion of trust, because words, gestures and body language can so easily be misinterpreted in such situations. When the relationship no longer works, both people need to be honest about what is going on, and be willing to terminate it if necessary. Such a decision can be an avenue for growth (for both people), especially in retrospect, as some measure of emotional distance becomes possible.²⁰

The ability to give the other person space is of paramount importance

From what we have seen, it is clear that the process of cross-cultural spiritual direction is multi-faceted as well as delicate. It holds tremendous potential, and invites our engagement despite its risks. We need to continue exploring the dynamics involved in such processes, particularly since we are at a point in history where the demand for this

²⁰ Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings*, pp. 173-174 discusses inappropriate termination on the part of the director. Fear in this case can be linked with cultural misunderstanding.

kind of cross-cultural spiritual accompaniment can only become greater and more frequent.

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From The Ignatian Tradition

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ONE GIVING AND FOR THE ONE RECEIVING THE EXERCISES

Achille Gagliardi

*Achille Gagliardi (1537-1607) entered the Society of Jesus in 1559, taught theology in Rome, and spent periods teaching and working pastorally in Turin, Milan, and in various other places now in Northern Italy. His Latin **Commentary on the Spiritual Exercises**, dating from the 1580s, was edited by the Belgian Jesuit, Constantin van Aken in 1882.¹*

*We can only speculate about the background of the text. It was never published in Gagliardi's lifetime; he was in some quarters a suspect figure on account of another work, the **Breve compendio di perfezione cristiana**, and of his association with 'la dama milanese', the spiritually gifted Isabella Cristina Beringaza.*

Here we reproduce part of a chapter in which Gagliardi discusses giving the Exercises, and—more briefly and perfunctorily—making them. Gagliardi strikingly elaborates Ignatian teaching on God's presence in the self and on sensitivity to individuals. At the time it was written, it may have represented a minority position in a tradition which was becoming relatively conformist. But we need to be cautious about reading late sixteenth-century Jesuit spirituality in terms of a simple conflict between 'ascetics' and 'mystics', between free spirits and authoritarian superiors. Gagliardi's career as a teacher in Rome seems to have ended because he complained to the Pope about the liberalism of the then General, Everard

¹ *Commentarii seu explanationes in Exercitia spiritualia Sancti Patri Ignatii de Loyola*, edited by Constantin van Aken (Brugge: Desclée, 1882). The passage given here is to be found on pp. 40-51.

Mercurian (often presented as a martinet and as a spiritual philistine), in regard to a fellow-teacher whose doctrine was too adventurous.²

*The chapter is set out in four loose sections. The first section is little more than a repetition of two Ignatian texts: the passage from the **Constitutions** where Ignatius recommends that Jesuits in training gradually become familiar with giving the Exercises;³ and the eighteenth Annotation, insisting that people not be given more of the Exercises than they can cope with. Then he sets out three more 'principles': flexibility; a style of teaching close to the learner's experience; and the boundaries between what the retreat-giver does and what must be left to God. Each section ends with a brief paragraph on how these principles apply for the one making the Exercises.*

The Prudent Discrimination of the One Giving—The Sincerity of the One Receiving

The second principle for the one giving the Exercises is this (assuming doctrine and their having been taken through the whole book of the Exercises): when they get down to practice, in other words to actually giving someone the Exercises, they must not be tied to the letter of what that book lays down in such a way that they maintain all these things in every case indiscriminately, constantly maintaining the same content and style. The reason is that our working with grace must be accommodated, both to the diversity of people, and to the grace itself. Moreover, when the prescriptions and rules of the book are given for us

² Gagliardi is a complex figure, and he has not been adequately studied. The standard reference works all refer to him, more or less satisfactorily: see Ignacio Iparraguirre and André Derville in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 6, cols. 53-64 (1967); Giandomenico Mucci, in the *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús*, vol. 2, pp. 1547-1548 (2001); Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, translated by William J. Young (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986 [1942]), pp. 257-258; Ignacio Iparraguirre in vol. 2 of his *Historia de los Ejercicios de San Ignacio* (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1955), pp. 39-43. A team under the leadership of André Derville has produced a French translation of the *Commentary on the Spiritual Exercises* and the *Breve compendio* (Paris: Desclée, 1996), though there are tacit omissions in the text; there is also an Italian translation of the material on discernment from the *Commentary* by Giovanni Ardledler and Giuliano Ruffo (Rome: Apostolato della Preghiera, 2000). Mario Gioia has prepared critical editions of the *Breve compendio* and of Beringaza's *Per via di annichilazione* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1996, 1994). In English, extracts from the *Commentary* have been published in *Woodstock Letters*, 46 (1917), a private publication of the Maryland Jesuits; and in the Indian journal *Ignis*, 16 (1987). Van Aken's edition worked off only one of the several extant manuscripts, and needs to be replaced with a more critical treatment.

³ *Constitutions* IV.8.5, E [508-509].

so that we can work along with this grace, it is not the case that they must all be given to everyone literally in the same way, without any distinction. They should rather be given with the greatest prudent discrimination—individuals should be given only those things which suit them. It can be established that this was the mind of Holy Father Ignatius from the fact that he leaves almost all matters to the one giving the Exercises, for them freely and authentically to change the rules, and accommodate them in line with the diversity and with the needs of those receiving them.⁴

For, *first*, Holy Father Ignatius arranges all the Exercises in four Weeks, as is clear. On this point, he adds that there is no need for each one of these to contain seven or eight days, but rather they can be cut or extended, in line with the material under consideration, with the different movements of the spirit (which—when you are dealing with many people—varies), and with the slowness or alacrity of mind, aptitude and movement on the part of the one receiving the Exercises.

Secondly, as regards whether to give them all, or a few, or more of them, he appropriately teaches that the Exercises are to be accommodated depending on the state of the one who is exercising: for instance as regards age, learning, intelligence, strength, and so on.

Thirdly, he allows that people occupied with serious business can make the Exercises over an hour and a half, and leave the rest of the day to their work. From this it follows, in this and other similar cases, that the order laid down in the book is being changed.

Fourthly, once different movements of the spirit have been noted in the one receiving, he leaves matters free: for he would prescribe ‘some spiritual exercises appropriate for that necessity of soul at the time’—in other words, different things for the difference in such need.

Fifthly, he wanted it to be open for the one giving the Exercises to add, during the purgative way, meditations about death, about sin and its punishments, about the judgment and similar things.

Sixthly, in the same place, having set out how the hours of the day are to be allocated to the various exercises, he adds: ‘this distribution of

⁴ In the paragraphs which follow, Gagliardi is drawing on Exx nn. 4, 17-19, 71-72, 130, 162, 205-206, 209, 227-229. He is using the 1548 official Latin text (Vulgate), now regarded as somehow less authentic than the Spanish version corrected in Ignatius’ own hand. However, an English translation by Pierre Wolff of the Vulgate has been published (Ligouri, MO: Triumph, 1997).

time can be increased or diminished, in line with differences of age, spirit, bodily disposition and constitution’.

Seventhly, he wanted the use of the additional directions to be varied and circumspect, in line with the differences in the mysteries that we meditate; for some require penance and others not; some sadness, others joy.

Eighthly, the Mysteries of the Life of Christ in the Second Week could be supplemented by other meditations, or else reduced, depending on the possibilities of time, and what will be useful to the person exercising themselves; then he takes the same point over into the mysteries of the Third and Fourth Weeks.

Ninthly, as regards the points in this same kind of exercise, he leaves the exercitant free to do more or fewer of them, according to what they feel will help them more.

From all this it follows that learning and knowledge in the one giving are not enough. Beyond this, they must have enough prudent discrimination to know how to accommodate the rules and the exercises in line with how people and their dispositions differ, by changing, reducing, adding, according to what they will see in the Lord to be more appropriate. *This* is the reason why Holy Father Ignatius gave a very exact explanation of everything in the whole practice—not so that we follow it for everyone, but so that we use it to draw on, take things from it, and change what it is appropriate for individuals.

***Learning and
knowledge are
not enough***

Elsewhere he rightly says that the fruit of the Exercises will not come unless a person keeps to the times, styles, and additional directions laid down. But he is talking about the one who receives, whose role is to do nothing on their own initiative, but rather to do everything following what the one giving lays down. For it is the job of the one giving to lay down in minute detail the times and styles and everything else—and this differently in line with the differences between people. This point is left to their prudent discrimination. Since none of these things are decidable in a book, he has set out the most elaborate form for everything, for the one giving the Exercises to observe to the extent that is possible. And they should change it *ad lib*, when they judge this to be worthwhile.

Thus it follows that this style of learning is difficult. For, beyond book-knowledge and one’s own experience, it requires so much prudent discrimination—which is in fact a sign of its praiseworthiness and its

high worth. But there is no lack of things that relieve this difficulty. For a certain divine gift is present, furnished by God: that of discriminating between spirits. On this we should rely, more than on any other skill or prescription. Obedience also comes to our help: a person should give themselves to this task of giving the Exercises through obedience's command, not on their own initiative. They should trust very much in the Lord, that He, commanding what He wants, will also give what He commands.⁵ Thirdly, when it is a matter of actually giving the Exercises, a person should make every effort to do what is in their power, and commit themselves without any anxiety of spirit totally to God. For the anointing of the Holy Spirit will make good whatever might be desired in the person. Therefore they should hold to the prescriptions of the book, come to understand the disposition of the one receiving and their need, and meet the necessity from the relevant provisions. If they are not able to do this on the basis of their knowledge and experience, they should gradually become familiar with things until they have acquired perfect skill: that is what doctors and skilled persons of every other sort normally do. Meanwhile they should trust in the Lord, and hope; they should do what they can without any anxiety and with a pure intention of spirit. They should understand that God will not allow the soul to be cheated of its fruit, as daily experience shows.

To this second principle for the one giving there should correspond in the one receiving a certain sincerity of spirit, enabling them to reveal in full confidence what is going on inside them, so that they can be directed, to the one giving. This is what a sick person does for the doctor with their disease. Above all they should reveal the thoughts and feelings sent by either the good or the evil spirit, so that they can be discerned: the maladies which ensue (of the passions, the affections, the trains of thought and so on) so that they can be cured; and also the good things which ensue from the good spirit, in desires, consolations, intentions and other things, so that about these the person can be illuminated and directed. All these points have been gathered from what has been continuous practice, and from various places scattered around the book. They should adhere to what is laid down—and in everything, even very small things, they should conscientiously observe the instructions of the one giving right down to the least detail.

⁵ An allusion to a famous saying recorded in Augustine's *Confessions*, book 10, c. xxix (40).

Teaching and Learning: Why and How

The third principle is about the method that the one giving the Exercises should adopt in giving the rules and prescriptions to the one receiving, and in giving instruction about everything that arises in this learning process.

For, *first*, they must teach in good order, just as is normal in other fields of learning. They give first principles, drawing other points from these in an ordered fashion, as it were architectonically. It is necessary for the one giving the Exercises to know the whole of what is to be learnt in this kind of way, since they are themselves architects. But very often this will be unsuitable for the one receiving: their spirit should not be overwhelmed or frightened off. They need just a few things—practical things—about what they are actually meant to do as it comes up. And the method should also be practical. You should be like a teacher: ‘this is to be left out’; ‘this is to be done’; ‘this is to be changed’;

***People need
just a few
practical things***

‘this is to be toned down’, and so on. Go gently and gradually, so that the person scarcely realises or notices that there is a skill involved. Be very brief, so that they can remember what you are saying, and find it easy to put it into practice. While the person is recounting and revealing what is going on for them, there is an opportunity here which can be used to give them particular instruction, encouragement and direction. For in this way, they will easily make progress, and be encouraged towards greater things. It is they who will fill out what is being said, and gently make very great progress.

These are the practical methods by which children are educated in any skill whatever. If it were done in any other way, they would be confused, overwhelmed and dispirited. The whole book proclaims this throughout. For on this account it does not keep to any sort of logical, scientific order or method, of the kind we hand on among ourselves. It assumes that the one giving has got all that. Rather, here and there, in various places, it assigns instructions for a particular point in the actual practice, beginning with more obvious things that are less to do with perfection, and suitable for the one receiving. Although this does bring about a certain confusion, it is something done by Holy Father Ignatius with great discrimination and wisdom, in order that the one giving will think about what will be useful for the one receiving. At the same time, he is also teaching the one giving how they should use the instructions

in order to educate the one receiving. Nothing should be beyond their understanding; everything should be done in its place, that is, once they have completed what has come before. This requires great experience, flexibility, and prudent discrimination if a person is to have this sort of habitual feeling for this style of teaching. What might be appropriate at a particular time should be always at their fingertips. They must not add what is not relevant, nor offer less than is required.

What must correspond to this principle in the one learning is a very great attention to what is being said: they must ponder these things, be fully docile, and be observant—as is clear from the whole book.

Observing Limits

Fourthly and finally, the one giving the Exercises should observe limits: how they should move forward with the one receiving to a specific point, and where they should stop. When he explains this matter, Holy Father Ignatius wisely teaches that the spirit of the one making the Exercises is to be disposed by the instructions and advice of the one giving; they must be enlightened and moved on as far as they are capable. But then, helped by these means, they are to deal with God themselves, immediately, and to obtain in prayer and in communion with Him the light and gifts by which they can attain and reach the goal of the Exercises: being purged of vices; becoming clearer about their own state of vocation; being made a new person by being made to shine in the virtues by God's own self through an amendment of their whole life; the perfection of the spiritual life; ascending the summit of charity and of union with God. And since this whole art consists in almost nothing beyond this principle, the most important of all, we now need to explicate it thoroughly.

First, therefore, the one giving the Exercises must—as far as their own zeal and desires are concerned—embrace everything that we have mentioned in a generous spirit. In God's presence they must help the one receiving towards all these things by their prayers, moving them forward with the greatest effort and fervour, begging for them all these good things. But in their practice, they must adopt an extreme moderation of spirit, self-control and prudence, in case they get led on by their fervour of spirit and, while they are wanting to manage everything of themselves, attain nothing.

Secondly. They should understand that the changing of the human heart, the illumination of the mind, the inflaming of the affections, the calling to any state of perfection whatever—in short the provision of the things which are sought through the Exercises—are matters for God alone. Hence they must also be entrusted to God alone, so that all these things can be brought about in the spirit of the one receiving immediately, without the activity of any human being.

It is in itself a holy deed to exhort our neighbour to taking vows, to invite them to a state of perfection, and to persuade them of these things though scriptural motives and examples. Likewise it is holy by the same means to dissuade them from vices, to stimulate them to the love of the virtues in many and effective ways, to reveal to them clearly their faults so that they can amend, to give full meditations in which both the mind and the feelings have whatever can be put forward in such material so that meditation can occur not just for one hour but for several. But because of what has just been said, all these other things are to be omitted during the time of the Exercises. For, though it can happen that a person be moved and persuaded by these things, this is nevertheless inappropriate during the Exercises themselves. For, first, we do not know what God is wanting from that soul; while, led on by our fervour, we are arbitrarily commending something higher than the person is capable of, we are often imposing on them a very serious danger and harm. Secondly, once our persuasion ceases, they will easily fall into temptation, because it was by a human spirit that they were led into changing their state of life, not by God—and they become unstable, falling into a very serious sadness of soul. When, by contrast, they are led immediately by God, they are steeped in a much greater spiritual relish, they are moved more powerfully, they become far more certain about their vocation and more steadfast in their intention. Moreover, by this way of operating, the highest action, which is God's alone, is left to God alone: we give to God what is God's.

There is no lack of spiritual books full of the treasures of the virtues, commending every possible loftiness with the highest eloquence and persuasiveness. These, however, anticipate and thus impede the things sent into us by God, because they are trying to commend the same thing to everybody at all times. Moreover, the gifts of vocation and divine inflowing are as many as there are individual souls. The highest instance of skill and prudent discrimination, therefore, consists in



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Ignatius Giving the Exercises to a Student in Paris

directing individuals' spirits so that, joined immediately to God, they may be taught by God what God wants of them individually—directing them only for this purpose and by these means.

That is what Holy Father Ignatius, the true master of this art, is seeking throughout this divine book. That is why it does not contain any erudition, why it does not offer persuasion, why it has no power to move the feelings by the strength of its eloquence. Instead it starkly, simply, puts forward very brief precepts, rules and points, through which the soul can be led to God's own self, and allow the creator in person to do all the business with the creature immediately, and the creature with the creator.

This second way is of course much more difficult than the first. For it is not so difficult to portray from the scriptures the excellence of the virtues, the ugliness of the vices, the summit of perfection, and other

such things, in such a way that the recipients are moved and persuaded. But accommodating precepts point by point to individuals, so that they can be disposed to communion with God,⁶ and attain through that union what they are seeking in very deep and difficult matters—there is no doubt that this is tough, indeed heroic.

Thirdly. It follows that the one giving the Exercises is obliged to a certain indifference of soul, to a certain balance, as Holy Father Ignatius says, regarding all states of life, vows, vocations and other such things. What is absolutely necessary is that their spirit be set on one thing only: that they desire to move the soul with which they have been entrusted to the interior disposition and readiness that enables the soul to be illuminated and directed by God, according to God's own good pleasure.

Fourthly. From this it follows that they err who want to tie those receiving the Exercises to what they have experienced within themselves, or to that to which they themselves have been called and impelled. They fail to notice that this is a plague and perversion of this art; this is to tie God down, and impose on God a law whereby God should act with another soul as God has done with theirs. Whereas very often something quite different—different from what the one giving has as a goal for themselves—is appropriate for this other soul, both because of the soul's capacity and because of the way in which the divine good pleasure works itself out. Therefore they must abstract from themselves, and, accommodating to the soul's receptivity, put forward those rules from the book that are appropriate for it.

Fifthly. They should realise that what marks this art out consists wholly in their observing the good movements of nature and grace, which are normally very diverse. When you are dealing with bodily constitutions, one illness is purged by being sweated out, another by some other means; one food suits one person, another food suits another. In the same way, an experienced spiritual doctor must move individuals forward in accord with the different motions of divine grace, and bring the soul to the point at which it can deal immediately with God. For some are led by fear; others by the way of love; others in other ways. Individuals must be moved differently, following the movements of grace, just as a doctor follows the movements of nature.

⁶ *Dei consortium*—a phrase which evokes much without making precise commitments; translation is uncertain.

Sixthly. Given that the soul needs to be prepared in the mind and the affections to deal immediately and worthily with God, it follows that the disposition of the soul which the one giving the Exercises should seek to promote in the one receiving consists in the removal of two impediments. The first of these is ignorance in the mind, removed by instruction in whatever they are to deal immediately with God about. The second is the whole range of inordinate passions, so that the person can be placed within the same balance and indifference that we have already said befits the one giving the Exercises. They should not incline more to one state of life than to another—and the same with regard to other things. The soul should present itself to God like a *tabula rasa*, so that God can impress on it whatever might be pleasing to God. There is plenty on this in the material about the Election.

Seventhly. The one giving the Exercises must look out for this above all: to overcome any difficulty and to draw the one receiving to accept and observe all that they lay down for them, until they feel that the person is disposed to receive the supernal light and instigation from God. In this, two errors are to be avoided on either side. On the one hand, there is that of the exercitant failing to observe what is laid down because of their tepidity of spirit, and therefore not feeling in their prayer any movement or instigation from the different spirits; they reach only the skin of the Exercises, without any fruit. On the other, they can be overcome, by sadness or some other similar affection, or alternatively by the temptation of the devil, and thus be inclined to what is harmful. Then it is more appropriate for them to strive towards the contrary, or at least to suspend all deliberation. Alternatively, in the fervour of their consolations they can be too headlong in their promises and vows: in these circumstances, the appropriate thing is that they should not deliberate at all; they should pull themselves together and ripen into the indifference already noted, so that later they can be illuminated by the rules for the Election.

Eighthly. Once the spirit of the one receiving the Exercises has been disposed by the one giving them, and is ready for communion with God, there follow agitations of various spirits, that is of the good and the bad; there is also the danger that they will be deceived by the devil. Therefore they need to be helped. This happens first through the rules for the discrimination of spirits, so that they are not taken in under the appearance of good. Secondly, once they have distinguished the holy inspirations from the others, we must take care that they observe them,

weigh them, and then, with the help of their own diligence and effort, become able to elicit the divine good pleasure—in other words what God wants from them—so as strenuously to pursue it. All these things will be explained practically in their proper place.

From what has been said, it is easy to gather how the one receiving the Exercises should correspond to this fourth principle. For *first*, in those respects where they are to be directed by the one giving, they should, like a small child, present themselves as easy, docile and very respectful in every way. *Secondly*, they must work hard so as to carry out what is laid down. *Thirdly*, they must be concerned about the indifference we have been mentioning, avoiding the excesses of tepidity or overhasty fervour. In their desolations, they should leave off the thoughts that the sadness suggests; in consolations, they should beware of fervour that is immature and going too quickly. *Fourthly*, they should diligently observe the different spirits as they are inspired on different occasions, and not get stuck in their consolations, but much more seek in the consolations what God is wanting from them, and what they must suffer for this purpose, so as to attain it.

HUNGER FOR THE CONNECTION

William J. O'Malley

EVEN CARL SAGAN, THE WORLD-RENOWNED ASTRONOMER, felt it. Smugly dismissive he may have been about organized religion, but in every frame of 'Cosmos', the TV series in which he confronted the immensity and mysteries of the heavens, Sagan's face radiated the same astonished wonderment St Teresa and John of the Cross must have experienced when confronted with God; the same awe at the immensity of it all that Navaho and Mayans and Australian aborigines knew without need or ability to comprehend it; the hunger for a connection to the Energy Behind It All.

In his novel *Contact*, now a film, Sagan's inner self (not his rational mind) kept going back to that tremendous elusiveness, as helplessly as a finger to a loose tooth. At those times, Sagan the renowned scientist joined the bereft Lear and Edgar on the storm-blasted heath: 'Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art', so puny in the enormity of it all—yet blessed or cursed with the conviction we are somehow akin to and somehow in contact with the Force that energizes it all. Sagan felt—*knew*—there was 'something' out there. Perhaps not what we call God, but an intelligent, purposive *someone*. Sagan's conviction was undeniable, judging from his response: awe, wonder, yearning. Perhaps adoration.

Only the pitifully autistic and sociopathic among us can totally avoid that confrontation with the numinous, with what Hopkins calls 'the dearest freshness deep down things', a presence more riveting than its physical stimulus: a wind-savaged seaside; a mountain at dawn; an infant's tiny hand curled round your finger; the climax of the *1812 Overture*; hearing, 'And I love you so much, too'. Such moments are heart-stopping, breathtaking, mind-blowing, because they do, in fact, overload our merely mental circuits with an enlivening presence too large for them to accommodate. They ignite, if only momentarily, the slumbering human soul.

Yet today we have become nearly immune to atavistic awe, shielded from sunsets by high-rises, unaware of the sigh of the wind and the harrumph of the waves. As Hopkins complained in 'God's Grandeur', 'all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil . . . nor can foot feel, being shod'. The profoundest part of ourselves is anaesthetized by dispiriting work, lobotomizing meetings, *ersatz* entertainment, mindless schooling, listless liturgies. The soul atrophies.

Blame the Greeks. Blame Aquinas. Blame every philosopher who defined human beings as 'rational animals'. Blame every educator who said the goal of human growth is 'a sound mind in a sound body', as if we were no more than apes with implanted computers. Neither body nor brain (which we share with beasts) can explain our response to the numinous. Nor can the urge among the relative few for integrity, honesty, and unselfish love be rooted in sinews or electro-chemical interchanges. These specifically human activities, self-evidently part of us however much some want to deny them, have to arise from a third human power: the soul.

***Our only human
purpose is to
discover the soul
and ignite it***

My soul is the wellspring of all in myself that is unquantifiable, irreducible to the physical or rational, as elusive as the power within Carl Sagan—and the Power he responded to—when confronting the infinite carouse of space. Impervious to Geiger counters or x-rays, yet as self-evident as my impulse to survive death. The soul is not rational, but it is not irrational, any more than falling in love, or resolving to be honourable in a devious world, or seeing the 'David' in a block of flawed marble are irrational. And spirit is to soul as the flame is to the candle. Our only human purpose is to discover that soul and ignite it. Yet it would be rare to hear a homily or a religion class even advert to that profoundest of truths.

What Sagan's face radiated when he stared at the heavens was his (unacknowledged) soul, the religious impulse, what in every human being at graced times cries, 'Yes. Yes, there's *got* to be more!' Hope in the seeming darkness. As Newman put it, 'the heart speaks to the heart': *cor ad cor loquitur*.

For 50 years, despite all the colossal changes in lifestyle, prosperity, and moral ethos, the one character adolescents have been sure to identify with is Holden Caulfield, the central character in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. They are constantly searching for something to fill the disenchanted void in the self: the yearning,

unevolved soul. The malaise begins once you find your parents really aren't perfect, that everything about Christmas was a hoax, that people can't be trusted, that the Teflon cocoons are really impenetrable. You discover the truth of what Matthew Arnold wrote in the nineteenth century:

. . . the world which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain . . .

So we settle in for a journey across a featureless landscape, coping, improvising, surviving, dead-end souls.

Most often, falling in love cures the disenchantment, at least for a while. Someone cares for you as helplessly as your mother used to; you are affirmed despite your faults, a prince and princess again, 'at home'. But unless being-in-love flowers into loving—a commitment of two souls—then in mid-life the second disillusionment looms. Like Updike's Rabbit and Ibsen's Hedda, you find your spouse is no longer Cinderella or Prince Charming; your children have minds of their own; other people's agendas have come between you and 'the top'; the booze and pills aren't panaceas but only placebos; your body begins betraying you even more treacherously than in adolescence. Then you die. Which, in too many cases, is redundant.

Sisyphus embodied it. Fellini captured it. And Peggy Lee nailed it:

Is that all there is? Is that all there is? If that's all there is, my
friends, then keep on dancing. Let's break out the booze and have a
ball, if that's all . . . there is.

Even believers sometimes feel that. And unbelievers feel it all the time, however unable they are to focus the formless malaise, the hunger that defies words and dogmatic formulation. The reason is that we lost our souls. Or, more likely, we never found them.

The Seismic Shift from Heart to Head

The conversion our society has undergone in the last 50 years—from Norman Rockwell to Andy Warhol—has been so gradual that only

those of us in our latter years appreciate how profound it was. The shape-shift in our society's soul is as deep and diminishing as the transformation from the harsh complexities of Christendom to the harsh simplicities of the Reformation.

From Lush to Lacklustre

Medieval times were hardly as idyllic (at least for ordinary folk) as some historians of ideas would have us believe, dwelling as they do in loftier eyries. Medievals were savaged by plague, subject to the whims of despots, in service to most unChristian crusades, benighted in superstitions. Because they were on such intimate terms with death, they became obsessed about purgatory, calculating times and indulgences.

But even though feudal society was unfairly determined by accidents of birth, everyone at least knew where he or she stood. The ethos—and each individual in it—had a soul, a connection to the transcendent, a sense of being 'at home'. Each ordinary citizen of Christendom had a matrix of beliefs, symbols, and customs that made some sense of it all, situating the soul or self in a communion of saints transcending the mortal and momentary. Each day named its time-segments from the cycle of the liturgical hours; each week integrated the secular and sacred; each year offered a web of feasts and fasts, pilgrimages and processions. Read Ellis Peters' stories of Brother Cadfael. Read historical novels like Sigrid Unset's *Kristin Lavransdatter*.

The root of 'religion' is *ligare*, to bind—a connection—and the lowest peasant *felt* that connection of all Christendom with the Beyond in their midst. Even the meanest church had its rood-loft and candles, its statues and frescoes of our ecclesial family, its windows in which the common belief was radiantly captured. Nearly everyone felt 'at home' within the common myth. Thomas More did not surrender his head for the pope, or even for the papacy, but for the unity of the family of Christendom.

However, even More admitted that world was also riddled with superstition and greed, power-mad emperors and barons and popes, relic racketeers, unseemly monks. So reaction was inevitable. First Luther, then the more rigid Calvin, challenged its excesses. Then, tragically, as the reformist juggernaut gained momentum, its basic conviction became (at least in England) that the only way to reform was to destroy.



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The Warning to Swearers, St Laurence Church, Broughton, Buckinghamshire

The Pietà is surrounded by nine well-dressed young men holding either Christian symbols or parts of the body, as a reminder to those who swear 'by Christ's feet' or 'by the Cross' of what their language signifies.

Reason pre-empted the soul, the imagination, the hunger for more than doctrinal purity: the connection of the ordinary self to the wellspring of the Spirit.

Zealots pulled down idolatrous crucifixes, whitewashed church frescoes, smashed statues and stained-glass windows, replaced tabernacles with the Bible and the *Sanctissimum* with a homily, hurled out altars to replace them with plain tables, sold vestments to be cut up for gowns, tied sacring-bells to the necks of their sheep. (Imagine what

an iconoclast might have done to the Sistine Chapel in the name of theological probity.) Most tellingly, they forbade the elevation of the host with its accompaniment of bells and lighting candles on the ground that it was idolatry, and the formula for Holy Communion degenerated into: 'Take and eat this in *remembrance* that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving.'

The Reformation dismantled a whole symbolic world, a communal context, a great cycle of feasts and fasts, a shared repertoire of beliefs, a system of assurances by which they gauged their lives, and an accessible catechesis for the unlettered, for those outside the ivory turrets of speculative theology, for those of flickering faith. It snuffed out the soul of religion, a complete denial of the affective lives of ordinary Christians, in the name of a purity of doctrine in which they were not at all interested.

A gallant (and surely not rational) few clung to the old matrix of meaning, hiding priests and vestments, at the risk of their property and their lives. They genuinely believed their souls were more important. The majority conformed, but what kept the conformists 'in church' despite the numbing homily and the sterile, stripped-down service was that inner need for a *felt* connection to the divine, even without the spirit-quickenings externals. Many now believe that could describe the contemporary Church.

Surely the Reformers had legitimate complaints about the ways simple folk believed that prayers and Masses could manipulate God regarding torments either in this life or of the next, and that sacramentals truly were effective talismans. But like many reformers, they were reductionists, pulling up the wheat along with the tares. Icons can indeed become idols, but rarely. If all the paintings and statues in medieval churches were idolatrous, what of the ubiquitous images of Queen Elizabeth on which her toadies doted? When does a symbol focusing the wandering mind become an object of worship? True, the proliferation of (sometimes dubious) saints and especially of the cult of Our Lady might 'distract' us from God; but do many truly good friends (even among us sinners) begrudge other mutual friendships?

The Reformers' tragic simplism denied the imagination, and submitted it to rationalist doctrine. Theology negated religion: the spirit-to-Spirit connection. The head paralyzed the heart.

For all Christendom's simple-mindedness and superstition, it was a root affirmation of that most fundamental Christian doctrine, the profoundest connection of heaven and earth: the Incarnation, the embodiment of the sacred within the human community, the hallowing of the commonplace when 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us'. For the great majority of believers transubstantiation was *not* a theological abstraction. It *was* the Incarnation, more concretely real than the presence of Yahweh in the Holy of Holies, right there in their village churches! As Malle, the madwoman in Hilda Prescott's great chronicle, *The Man on a Donkey*, sighs to her young friend, 'Think of it, Wat! God, in a bit of bread, come to bring morning into the darkness of our bellies!'

It is no wonder the rape of the monasteries and chantries, the prohibition of liturgical spectacle, gave rise to the popular entertainment of the English theatres—just as in our own time many rock concerts have become liturgies celebrating the Id in us. But the human spirit remains hungry, restless.

From Vatican I to Vatican II

Just as the medieval ethos was not as idyllic as *Camelot*, no one who lived in the US in the 50s and had survived a Great Depression bracketed by two world wars would claim that life then was as idyllic as *I Love Lucy*. But there was a civic sense of community, a mythic awareness of a national soul—precisely because of those three communally endured afflictions, and there was a (religious?) sense of a common, meaningful matrix of beliefs. For theologians and thinkers, the Roman Catholic Church at the time was shamefully repressive, and even the local monsignor was often a martinet. Yet for men like my father, it could never be, 'Church is church; business is business'. Ordinary men like him went willingly to novenas, missions, retreats, and rosary rallies in the stadium. Why? The hunger for a connection to something more fulfilling than survival. Even teenage boys were unembarrassed carrying a rosary, wearing a scapular, singing at May crownings. My own vocation was all but settled in senior year high school once a Jesuit scholastic had taken two of us to Holy Week *Tenebrae*: heart-stopping, breathtaking, mind-blowing.

I submit that the 'vocations crisis' is not rooted solely in the issue of celibacy. It is a question of meaningfulness, a problem of unenlivened souls. I teach baptized pagans.

For all its simplism, the Church that nurtured my vocation provided a pageantry that supported the faith of those who said, 'I believe. Help my unbelief': a pageantry which could touch the soul even of an unbeliever like Henry Adams at Chartres.

And now it's gone.

As most Elizabethan Christians did, we went along with the unnerving changes, partly because, like them, we are mostly docile, and because the priests have bigger heads, more time to think about these things, and probably know what they're doing. But the soul's unfocused restlessness and hunger remain as unsatisfied as the brain with tabloids and the belly with junk food. We purport to have the truth. But the truth should set you free, give you joy. Can anybody *see* Christian freedom? Can they *feel* Christian joy? Do Christians seem to have more enlivened souls than unbelievers? Those are rock-bottom questions.

Vatican II was a great leap forward—at least for bishops, theologians, and liturgists. It proclaimed religious liberty, collegiality, ecumenism, social justice, and a greater participation by the laity in comparatively small liturgical and parochial affairs. And many other Christian traditions in the 60s and 70s made similar reforms. But what did it do for 'the ordinary folk', the serfs and yeomen, the truck drivers and beauticians? These people who feel the divine hunger but are too tied up with agonizing practicalities, too self-deprecating to read and ponder, too distracted by the seemingly important to focus on the truly important? Who speaks for (and to) most of the occupants of our pews and classrooms? Clerics? Academics? Liturgists?

Jesus didn't go for the head, for niceties of discipline and doctrine. He went for the heart, for conversion of values, for enlivening the

***I don't see too
much heart in
the students
I teach***

spirit. Perhaps my perspective is too limited, but I don't see too much heart in the students I teach—or in their parents; in making moral and career decisions, their values are no different from the decent atheists' down the block; they seem as *dispirited* as everyone else. They seem to have far less awareness of the numinous and holy than even Carl Sagan had. Only a handful would dare claim to be atheists, yet their lives and choices at least seem to be made within a reality in which God doesn't exist—or is at best negligible.

Let me play the game of ‘what if’. What if every Church leader, every bishop, every priest and deacon, every parish minister, every catechist were to put aside *everything* else (perhaps, for a time, even the Christian gospel and the Church) and focus *only* on one question: How can I touch and enliven that hunger for the divine which lurks confusedly in the people I truly want to serve?

What strategies can I use to convince them they even *have* souls, powers within themselves irreducible to bodies and brains? How can I convince them there is a flame already burning in those souls? What means can I use to activate those souls—simply on a human level (to begin with)? It’s called pre-evangelization, about which there is much talk but little substantive action.

Only then can the people we serve even resonate to the gospel of altruism, of forgiveness, of transcendence-in-our-midst, of the living communion of saints within the Body of Christ. Without a genuine connection to God there can be no genuine religion, only ineptly dramatized theology that fails to move anyone.

I once had an unfortunate encounter with a well-placed churchman. He had just concluded a talk to religious educators, saying that he and his fellow bishops would do anything they could to make our job of evangelization easier. Overcoming my wonted shyness, I suggested that, since the liturgy is the only place the lives of the people we serve intersect with the visible Church, perhaps the greatest service the episcopacy could offer would be—at whatever cost—to enlist the services of theatre directors, playwrights, poets, and composers to come up with a liturgy which speaks to the human heart, which rouses the soul, which challenges rather than merely cherishes. We have a surfeit of theologians and liturgists and catechists. What we need is symbol-makers, people who satisfy not the mind but the soul.

It was a grave mistake. The speaker replied, mostly in italics, ‘Oh! *You* want to go back to the days of the *bells* and banners and banjos! When they were all jumping *ship*!’ He continued, but I was too busy creeping back to my seat in hopes of finding a moderate-sized black hole along the way.

Similarly, I have known publishers and catechists who nod in complete agreement at the need for pre-evangelization, for making our audiences aware first of their souls’ importance and potential, for focussing that restless hunger, for encouraging an awareness of the

divine dimension to our existence which feeds that hunger, and *only then* for moving on to the gospel and, if possible, to Catholicism.

But in practice, they feel the need to 'jump into the syllabus' because the administrators want test results; in preparing classes and liturgies, they have neither the time nor, I fear, the conviction to let their imaginations engage with the needs of those they serve, rather than with the clear-cut and coercive needs of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or the diocesan office. One publisher said about a morality text I wrote based solely on natural law, without a hint of scripture or Church doctrine, 'Nobody'll buy it unless it *screams* "Catholic"! And we're in business to sell books'.

They have substituted catechizing for conversion. To be fair, their own training was in most cases almost undilutedly headtrip, with very little instruction in the ways of the soul.

'Is that all there is?'

What if every bishop, priest, deacon, and catechist could start right there? Not from the Creed, not from the *Catechism*, not from the syllabus, but from the actual felt needs and confusions of those they honestly want to serve: from that religious impulse—the hunger for more than survival. Where Jesus started. 'Of course that's not all there is. I'm half-blind myself, but maybe I've groped my way forward a bit more than you have. Far enough to be sure the quest is worth it. Take my hand. We can both come closer to the One who justifies our yearning that there be more. Come and see.'

Wouldn't that be nice? Wouldn't that be sane?

'Surely you jest. How could one possibly *grade* that?'

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GUILT IS A CRY

Howard Gordon

GUILT IS A CONCEPT PROMINENT both in theology and psychology. Broadly speaking, theology tends to concentrate on objective guilt, that is on the *condition* of having done wrong, while psychology focuses on subjective guilt, that is on the *feeling* of having done wrong. This leads to a significant contrast. For, whereas wrongdoing normally (although not invariably) leads to a subjective feeling of guilt, subjective guilt often cannot be traced back to objective wrongdoing. This anomaly has fascinated not only those who work in the field of secular psychology, but also those Christians who are involved in pastoral work, and particularly those who care for the mentally ill. The simple formula, 'If you feel guilty, you must have done something wrong', is inadequate and inaccurate as a diagnostic assumption. A distinction has therefore been made between true guilt and false guilt. Objective guilt, when understood as the result of what would widely be accepted as wrongdoing, can always be regarded as true guilt; but subjective guilt may be either true or false.

My own fascination with this distinction increased significantly when from 1981 until 1992 I served as the Free Church Chaplain at Fulbourn Hospital, a psychiatric hospital in Cambridge, England. My weekly half-day in the hospital brought me into contact with all kinds of mental health problems, and with all kinds of patients. One problem which I came across repeatedly both intrigued and concerned me: the problem of unresolved guilt feelings. I was intrigued by it because of its frequency; I was concerned by it because it raised questions about Christian ministry. I, the Chaplain, was supposed to be in touch with a God who could deal with guilt feelings; but in practice the solution I was offering did not seem to work. I was quite prepared for the fact that talk of a God who forgives the repentant through Christ might well not help patients who were not Christians. But, disconcertingly, it did not seem to be helpful to Christians either. Typical conversations with Christian patients would develop like this:

Patient: I feel so guilty.
Chaplain: God can forgive every kind of wrongdoing.
Patient: Yes, I know that.
Chaplain: Have you asked God to forgive you?
Patient: Yes, I have.
Chaplain: Do you believe that he has forgiven you?
Patient: Yes, I do.
Chaplain: Then what is the problem?
Patient: I don't *feel* forgiven.

I noted that staff frequently advised such patients to learn to forgive themselves, but the concept of self-forgiveness was never explained, nor was any procedure for it ever suggested.

I therefore began to investigate the problem of guilt in greater detail. I did so first during a two-month sabbatical, in which I read some of the relevant literature, and then as a research project. After a wider literature review, I interviewed 23 former mental health patients in depth. These patients fulfilled four criteria: they regarded themselves as Christians; they had suffered from a depressive illness; guilt feelings had featured prominently in their illness; and they had received treatment. The interviews were analysed using Grounded Theory, a qualitative methodology in which concepts rather than statistics are compared. The concepts are then arranged in categories, and finally a core category is selected. The literature, both Christian and secular, greatly increased my understanding of the problem of guilt, but it was the interviews which enabled me to distinguish between different kinds of guilt feelings and to discern practical and effective ways of dealing with each of them. Although the interviews were conducted with former mental health patients, I am convinced that the findings of my research may legitimately be applied to those whose guilt feelings are not part of a psychiatric illness, but are nevertheless causing concern or even distress.

What I discovered from these interviews was that there are three kinds of guilt feelings. In all cases the sufferers believe that they have done something wrong. But in two of the three kinds there has been no wrongdoing. Because the Christian solution of repentance, confession and forgiveness is appropriate only to genuine wrongdoing, its use in the other two cases may be not merely ineffective, but actually counter-productive, because it will reinforce a conviction of wrongdoing which

is not justified. In addition, a person may be suffering from two or even all three kinds of guilt at the same time; in these cases, each kind needs to be carefully identified and distinguished, and then treated accordingly.

Transgression Guilt

The first kind of guilt feeling I called transgression guilt, because it is the result of wrongdoing which breaches widely accepted legal, moral or religious prohibitions. This is what is normally and correctly understood by the word 'guilt'. Some interviewees described transgression guilt that was so strong that it had made them mentally and emotionally ill. A male respondent aged 43 years described his guilt in the following way:

We had what is commonly called an affair, which eventually led to both our divorces, although we both say to ourselves and to each other now that . . . we would both have separated from our previous partners anyway, because we both felt that those particular marriages weren't working. The guilt arises from the betrayal of my ex-wife, albeit I feel very little for her now, but I feel it was still a betrayal; betrayal of a friend, namely my wife's ex-husband; and the third thing in the guilt . . . is the impact my separation has had on my daughter . . . I became ill during the first three months after I parted from my first wife, and it was the deceit, it was the betrayal, not a little sense of regret, nostalgia—I'm a great one for going for the things that used to be and wondering why they aren't as good now as they were. . . . There had been no history of divorce or marriage separation in my family; I was the first one . . . I just felt I'd let everybody down. The standards were there . . . set by example; nobody had actually sat me down and said . . . 'Marriages are sacrosanct for life'.

The guilt here arose from the interviewee's transgression of widely held standards for marriage to which both he and his family subscribed, from the betrayal and deceit which accompanied it, and from the consequences to which that transgression led. These consequences included a loss of innocence of which he was acutely aware—expressed in the word 'nostalgia'.

There is agreement between Christian and secular writers on the factors most likely to cause those with transgression guilt to feel unforgiven and to inhibit their own healing:

- They may be continuing the wrongdoing, or may wish, consciously or unconsciously, to continue it. In Christian terminology they have not truly repented.
- They may blame someone else for the wrongdoing rather than accepting their own responsibility or their own share of the responsibility.
- They may have an unforgiving attitude to another person, and be unable to receive forgiveness because they are unwilling to give it. This recalls the words in the Lord's Prayer: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us', and the comment of our Lord which immediately follows in Matthew's Gospel: 'But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (Matthew 6:15).
- They may see their guilt feelings as an appropriate punishment for their wrongdoing; that is, their guilt is an attempt at self-atonement. Sadly, it is one which never satisfies and never ends.
- They may need to make reparation where loss, damage or injury has occurred. Reparation may have been deliberately withheld, may never have been considered, or may have been considered but not yet undertaken.
- They may need to hear a formal pronouncement of forgiveness by the person wronged, or by an authority figure. The Catholic confessional, when correctly understood and used by the transgressor, is a powerful agent in this respect. Protestant clergy tend to use a relevant verse of Scripture, for example: 'If we confess our sins, He who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9).
- They may have a perfectionist personality. Perfectionists find it difficult to feel forgiven because their search for forgiveness is inseparably linked to the desire for the restoration of an unblemished self-image. Though forgiveness is possible, this kind of restoration is impossible.

In those who are suffering from unresolved transgression guilt, repentance needs to be initiated and forgiveness needs to be appropriated. For this to happen, gentle probing or even counselling is often required, in order to analyze which of these inhibitory factors may

be at work. The Church itself has often erected a barrier to forgiveness by over-emphasizing the doctrines of sin and punishment, and under-emphasizing the doctrines of mercy and grace. Guilt can be wholly negative and destructive. But, handled sensitively, it can also be a source of creative renewal. Jesus' words to the woman caught in adultery provide an excellent model: 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again' (John 8:11). This comment is totally satisfying both spiritually and psychologically. It neither condemns nor condones, but hears guilt positively as a cry for forgiveness, and challenges the forgiven person to respond with conduct demonstrating true repentance.

Perfection Guilt

The second kind of guilt feeling I called perfection guilt. As my interviewees revealed, perfection guilt is the result of unrealistic and idealistic expectations imposed by home, school and church. Two examples from the interviews illustrate this type of guilt. The first was a man aged 50 years:

If you didn't go to Oxford or Cambridge you were an academic failure. And I didn't. I think my parents—they wanted me to be clever. I remember my father once called me—very amiably, I hasten to add—he called me a beta plus. And I spent the rest of my life trying to prove him wrong. I think he'd be horrified if he knew how much that innocent remark of his had caused. But all the time I was trying to be alpha double plus, and nothing else would do . . . I got enough qualifications to go to university, probably the lowest that anybody's ever done—scraped my second A-level by two-thirds of a per cent—you know, one of those. And ever since then I went to the opposite extreme in the university, and almost got a first, because I wore myself out in the process of doing absolutely everything I could . . . to get the necessary result.

This man's perfectionism, which began in the home, was reinforced by his school and by the church which he attended. His upper second class degree at one of this country's leading universities, which for anyone else would have been regarded as a significant achievement, was for him an abject failure because it was not a first class degree at Oxford or Cambridge. He entered the Christian ministry, but his continuing striving for perfection caused his mental and emotional

health to break down—perfectionism frequently leads to workaholism—and he had to take early retirement.

The second example was a woman aged 56 years, who described a church service which she had attended in her mid teens:

I went to hear somebody speak . . . at a well-known [church]. I was sixteen, I think . . . and at the end of the address the preacher invited all those who wanted to be the best for God to make a promise that we wouldn't read another word when we got up in the morning of any newspaper or book or magazine before we had first read our own Bibles. I was very keen to be the best for God . . . but I found myself in a dilemma, because whilst in those days I read Bible reading notes which accompanied the Bible reading most days, there were some days when I missed. So I found myself in a dilemma. Yes, of course I wanted to be the best for God; I wanted to make all the promises that were going, but I didn't want to break my promises; I didn't want to promise something and then not deliver—in that sense I had very high standards. And so I sat tight for a bit. And then this other very strong, powerful urge began to work, and I felt I couldn't sit down. I mean, physically something was making me stand up, and I found that very disturbing, because I felt caught between the two—I wanted to do both things—I couldn't make up my mind, and something else was getting hold of me to make me stand up. And whether it was to do with other people's approval, perhaps even God's approval, I really don't know, but I stood up and made that promise. Inevitably I broke it, and it took me a very long time to manage the guilt of having let God down, having let myself down.

***The appeal and
the danger of
perfectionism***

This account poignantly demonstrates both the appeal of perfectionism—a fine ideal is being presented—and the danger of perfectionism—it is an unattainable ideal. It raises some pertinent questions. Did the preacher ever miss his own daily Bible reading, or read secular material before he read the Bible? If so, did he suffer from perfection guilt? If he did suffer from perfection guilt, did he have strategies for dealing with it, and what were they? If he did not suffer from perfection guilt, why not? And did he ever advise his congregation on how to cope with their occasional lapses from these perfectionist ideals?

Failure to attain high standards may certainly sometimes be the result of laziness or inefficiency, in which case it may cause

transgression guilt. But when the standards are impossibly high, or the individual is not sufficiently gifted to reach the standard set, then the feeling of failure is one of perfection guilt.

At this point the Christian is faced with a problem: Jesus himself said, 'You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48 RSV). Was he setting an impossibly high standard for his followers, which would be bound to result in constant feelings of guilt? The Greek word (*teleios*) which is used in this saying is misleadingly translated 'perfect'. With a root meaning of 'end' or 'purpose', it signifies, not absolute spiritual perfection, but rather completeness or fitness for a task. We may therefore paraphrase the saying in the following way: 'Just as God is entirely what he is intended to be, what he is capable of being, what we need him to be, so we as Christians are called to fulfil what we are intended to be, what we are capable of being, what God and other people need us to be'. It is still a high ideal, but no longer unrealistically or impossibly high, and it acknowledges differences of ability.

If transgression guilt is a cry for internal repentance and external forgiveness, perfection guilt is a cry for attainable internal standards and external affirmation. Does the teaching of Jesus contain any insight about this? The parable of the talents is conceived precisely along these lines (Matthew 25:14-30). A property owner entrusts three of his employees with financial resources while he is away from home, the critical words being 'to each according to his ability'. The first receives five talents, the second two talents and the third one talent. The third employee simply buries his money in the ground, and on the property owner's return is severely reprimanded. But the first produces another five talents in addition to his original five, and the second brings his two talents with a further two talents' profit. The first and the second have achieved according to their respective abilities, and are both affirmed with the words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant'.

The Church may well provoke feelings of perfection guilt by constantly demanding high standards of discipleship and rebuking those who fall short. The way of Christ is undoubtedly a high calling, but its proclamation must always be tempered by a realistic allowance for the differences between individuals and for the limitations of human nature. What is required of us is a goodness and faithfulness consistent with our own capabilities, and a willingness to offer to others proper and regular acknowledgement of achievements which are consistent with theirs.

Rejection Guilt

The third kind of guilt feeling I designated rejection guilt, because those who felt this type of guilt so frequently used the word 'rejection', and described experiences of rejection. These were people who had been abused verbally, emotionally and physically. Their sense of guilt and personal culpability came from a flawed but understandable process of reasoning: 'I have always been punished and rejected; only people who do wrong are punished and rejected; therefore I must have done something very wrong to be treated as I have been'.

The clearest expression of this kind of guilt in the interviews came from a woman of 49 years of age who described her life in the following way:

I think I was almost born guilty. All I ever knew was total rejection by my mother . . . Until I was nine years old, I wasn't told that [my father] was dead even. I'd got the notion from somewhere that he'd been in an aeroplane, and I can remember at the age of nine waving at planes and saying 'Daddy'. . . . I was always punished. . . . I was the sort of daughter that was never wanted, and also I was brought up on the fact that I was very premature, and I nearly killed my mother [in childbirth], and it was my fault that she couldn't have any more children. And I think when you're a child and nobody tells you your father's dead, you assume that you've done something wrong, otherwise he'd come and see you . . . I was never touched; even to this day my mother backs away from me, if I try to give her a peck on the cheek even. At school . . . I never made any friends at all—complete loner . . . At university . . . I wanted to sort of get rid of my mother and be like my father—I thought if he was about, he would like me, he would understand, you see . . . You probably find this universal with people like me: it's not so much love that you need in your life as trust; it's very difficult to ever trust anyone.

The guilt feelings expressed here resulted from the interviewee's actual rejection by her mother, including deprivation of physical affection, and her assumed rejection by her father. Three other consequences flow from this kind of rejection, in addition to the sense of guilt: a profound sense of isolation; difficulty in trusting others and therefore in forming relationships; and a low self-image. All these could be seen in this interview.



What, then, is the answer, and above all an appropriate Christian response, to rejection guilt? If transgression guilt is a cry for absolution, for the assurance of forgiveness, and perfection guilt is a cry for affirmation, for the assurance of achievement, then rejection guilt is a cry for integration, for the assurance of a welcome into accepting relationships and accepting communities. There is a temptation for the church to long for members who are talented, confident and willing to contribute. This is entirely understandable, but it must be balanced by an openness to those who are damaged, diffident and lacking in gifts.

Does the teaching of Jesus provide any insights or patterns here? In the parable of the Great Feast (Matthew 22:1-10; Luke 14:15-24) Jesus describes how a host who provides a sumptuous banquet is taken aback at the excuses given by his well-heeled and successful acquaintances for not attending. He orders his servants to go out into the streets, and to invite instead the poor, the disabled, the blind, and the lame. As one

who always practised what he preached, Jesus himself was regularly found in the company of society's rejects, and because of the welcome he gave to them, they felt valued and were willing to trust him. We do well to remember that the parables of the Kingdom are vignettes of what life is like when God is king, that is when God is allowed to take control, when God's will is done and God's way is followed. Jesus supremely embodied that life. Let the Church heed both his teaching and his example.

The Alleviation of Guilt

Psychiatry and psychology offer several approaches to guilt feelings. Psychiatry employs a medical model of treatment whose basic tenet is that psychiatric illnesses are organic disorders caused by physical and chemical disturbances in the brain and central nervous system, and are to be treated by physical and chemical means, most commonly by medication. According to this view, as the other symptoms disappear, so does the guilt. The reduction of the distressing symptoms of psychiatric illness is certainly to be welcomed, but sadly, as many of the interviewees indicated, the guilt does not necessarily disappear when the other symptoms have gone. And what if guilt is not a symptom but the underlying cause of the illness?

The psychoanalytic tradition proposes two solutions to guilt feelings: reducing the severity of the superego—that is, making the conscience less sensitive; and reparation. These solutions are also recommended in cognitive behavioural therapy. Reducing the severity of the superego is certainly desirable in the case of perfection guilt, and can be helpful in the case of rejection guilt—although it is preferable to aim at making the conscience more mature rather than less sensitive. In the case of transgression guilt, the idea of reducing the sensitivity of the conscience should be treated with caution, since it may create the impression that wrongdoing need not be taken too seriously. Reparation has already been mentioned as an essential component in the alleviation of transgression guilt when damage or injury has occurred. But it cannot deal satisfactorily with the other aspects of transgression guilt, for example the loss of innocence and the sense of unworthiness, because it is impossible to say how much reparation is required to remove how much guilt. And reparation is necessarily an inappropriate

approach to perfection guilt and rejection guilt, since there has been no wrongdoing.

At its heart the problem of guilt is one of unacceptability. This was the core category which emerged from the interviews. We feel unacceptable when we have done wrong, and we want to be forgiven. We feel unacceptable when we do not achieve the standards we would wish to attain, but we still want to be affirmed for what we have achieved. We feel unacceptable when we have been ostracized, and we want to be welcomed. At the same time we have to acknowledge our own need for genuine repentance, for realistic ideals, and for basic trust. However difficult, these conditions are essential if freedom from guilt is to be realised.

Nevertheless, guilt is a relational dilemma. We are unacceptable to other people. Acceptance and the feeling of acceptance must therefore be provided by other people. That is why advising those who suffer from unresolved transgression guilt to learn to forgive themselves is misleading. A person suffering from this kind of guilt may retain anger and disgust against themselves for the wrong which they have done, and they may need to let go of such self-punishing attitudes as an essential part of the healing process. But this is not forgiveness, for forgiveness is interpersonal, and self-forgiveness may be compared to sending oneself a birthday card. Indeed, from a Christian perspective the whole Bible can be seen as a treatise on the theme: we cannot forgive ourselves. The point is succinctly expressed in the well-known biblical verse, 'by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God' (Ephesians 2:8).

***Self-forgiveness
is like sending
oneself a
birthday card***

When the interviewees spoke to me about the resolution of their guilt feelings, they described acceptance as being derived from four sources. First, there were professionals—doctors, psychologists, counsellors, clergy—who, in addition to their professional skills, were good listeners, sensitive, understanding, non-judgmental, and encouraging. Secondly, there were supportive non-professionals—husbands, wives, other relatives, close friends—who exhibited the same personal qualities as the professionals, but were also more easily and frequently accessible. One female interviewee coined a new word for them: it was their 'being thereness' which counted. Thirdly, a new and more mature relationship with God had developed, which had replaced an immature and even harmful view of God. One interviewee, who had

been brought up with a strong sense of God as judge, found to his surprise that, as he expressed it, 'God is nice'. Another, who had suffered considerable rejection, said, 'God became my friend'. The lady who had wanted to be 'the best for God' but felt that she was never good enough, spoke of 'God's love for what he has made, and that means me'. The clergyman who had retired early after striving unsuccessfully to exercise a perfect ministry spoke of discovering subsequently 'the untidy God . . . much less institutionalised . . . much more real . . . who accepts me in all my weakness'. Fourthly, a few spoke of someone whose perception of the crux of their problem had enabled that person to make a liberating pronouncement which provided either substantial or complete release.

We too, as the people of Christ, are called to be the agents of acceptance. Guilt is a cry—a cry to be forgiven, a cry to be affirmed, a cry to be welcomed. The guilt of others becomes for us an invitation to engage in Christ's healing work by offering continually to one another in his name forgiveness, affirmation, and welcome. When we do so, we contribute to the prevention as well as to the alleviation of guilt.

Howard Gordon is a Baptist minister who has pastored churches in Coventry, Birmingham, Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. He gained his PhD from Cranfield University in 1997 for a thesis entitled *Christian Identity and the Alleviation of Guilt Feelings in Depressive Illness*. He is currently working as a whole-time National Health Service Chaplain in North Warwickshire, with special responsibility for mental health and care of the elderly.

‘HERE YOU HAVE ME, LORD!’

Fr Arrupe’s First Retreat as Superior General of the Society of Jesus

Joseph A. Munitiz

THE YEAR 2001-2002 WAS CELEBRATED AS AN ‘ARRUPE YEAR’ in many parts of the Society of Jesus, as a way of keeping alive the legacy of the man who served as Superior General from 1965 until felled by a stroke in 1981.¹ To round off the year, his successor, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, gave permission for the publication of the Retreat Notes written by Arrupe during the retreat he made after his election.² This had taken place on 22 May 1965, as the first decisive step by the 31st General Congregation, the highest governing body in the Society, which had been convoked on the death in 1964 of Fr Janssens, the previous Superior General. In many ways this was an unusual Congregation, both in the breadth of its decrees and in the time of its calling, which coincided with the third session of Vatican II. The assembled Jesuits, after nearly three months of deliberation, decided

¹ Born in 1907, Arrupe lived on after his stroke for another ten years.

² Pedro Arrupe, *‘Aquí me tienes, Señor’: Apuntes de sus Ejercicios Espirituales* (1965) (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2002). The volume has a short presentation by the present overall superior of the Spanish Jesuits (Isidro González Modroño), a concise but dense Introduction (about 25 pp.) by Ignacio Iglesias, outlining the historical context of the Notes and some features of their content, the text of the Notes themselves (about 50 pp., the original hand-written text fills some 40 pp.) reproduced with great fidelity to the original, some explanatory notes (with useful references and the Spanish translation of the Latin texts that figure in the Retreat Notes), and finally a series of additional ‘Annexes’. These are seven texts—one by Paul VI (the speech given to the General Congregation at the start of its deliberations, 7 May, in which he asked the Society to concentrate its efforts on the struggle against atheism), one by the Congregation accepting this new papal mission entrusted to it, and five by Arrupe himself, all dating to the period surrounding his retreat. As Fr González Modroño points out, they provide the essential framework for understanding Arrupe’s Notes.

Very appropriately Fr Kolvenbach entrusted the publication of Arrupe’s Retreat Notes to the veteran editor, Fr Ignacio Iglesias, who had also been a close associate of Fr Arrupe, serving as one of his official advisers on questions concerning the Spanish provinces. Although now well into his seventies, Fr Iglesias continues to publish regularly in the review, *Manresa*, that he edited over many years; he was also responsible for the publication of a remarkable series of Ignatian texts and studies, *Colección Manresa*, which includes over 25 volumes.

Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Retreat

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Sun Aug 1</i> | | <i>arrives in Rome</i> |
| <i>Day 1</i> <i>Mon Aug 2</i> | fol. 1-3 | Responsibility as General + <i>Principle and Foundation</i> (I): Continuous Creation (<i>Isaiah 41:8-16</i>) |
| <i>Day 2</i> <i>Tue Aug 3</i> | fol. 5-8 | <i>Principle and Foundation</i> (II): 'All Things . . . ': Glory of God |
| <i>Day 3</i> <i>Wed Aug 4</i> | fol. 9-10 fol. 13-16 | <i>Principle and Foundation</i> (III): 'Indifference' : ' <i>Tantum . . . quantum</i> ' Qualities Required as General: (<i>Constitutions IX.2</i> [723-735] + <i>Latin Election Questionnaire</i>) |
| <i>Day 4</i> <i>Thu Aug 5</i> | fol. 17 fol. 21-24 | First of these Qualities: Union with God our Lord <i>Two Standards</i> : The War—Satan v. Christ; Role of SJ |
| <i>Day 5</i> <i>Fri Aug 6</i> | fol. 25-28 | Union with Christ; Christ in the Eucharist |
| <i>Day 6</i> <i>Sat Aug 7</i> | fol. 29, 31 fol. 33 | <i>Call of the King</i> + Latin text from Paul VI <i>Memo</i> : Preparation for the Second Session of GC31 |
| <i>Day 7</i> <i>Sun Aug 8</i> | fol. 35-38 | The Struggle against Atheism: Tactics |
| <i>Day 8</i> <i>Mon Aug 9</i> | fol. 39-41 fol. 43-44 fol. 45-48 | The Role of SJ in this Warfare <i>Memo</i> : On the Missions <i>Schematic Outlines</i> : Organizations against Atheism; Offices and Men in the Society |
| <i>Day 9</i> <i>Tue Aug 10</i> | fol. 49-52 | Personal Love for Jesus and for Jesuits |
| <i>Wed Aug 11</i> | | <i>retreat ends</i> |

it would be more appropriate to draw the Congregation to a close after the fourth and final session of the Council, and therefore voted for a suspension that would last for over a year (15 July 1965–8 September 1966).

This welcome break gave Arrupe the chance at last to reflect before God on the new responsibility thrust upon him, one that he had not expected. He had arrived in Rome from Tokyo with a return ticket in his pocket. In Japan he held the post of Provincial, and in all he spent some 27 years there (1938-1965), working partly in the formation of novices, partly in administration. He had acquired a remarkable knowledge of the language, translating Spanish mystical works into

Japanese.³ The Jesuit administrative team moved to their summer quarters at Frascati on 22 July, and Arrupe followed them two days later. He returned to Rome to celebrate the Feast of St Ignatius in the Church of the Gesù on 31 July, but slept that night at Frascati. On Sunday, 1 August, he returned to the central Jesuit house in Rome, which then had only a skeleton staff for the summer, and on the Monday began his retreat, which would end on the Wednesday of the following week, one day longer than was usual for a traditional annual retreat.⁴

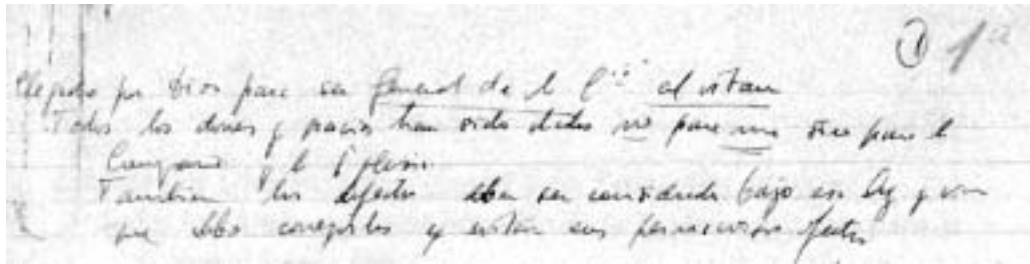
Although Arrupe was primarily devoting these days to prayer, he felt that this was not incompatible with reflection on certain practical matters, which might be construed as ‘work’: he wanted to prepare for the second session of the Congregation, and also to work on his address to the Council on the subject of the missions. Moreover he was considering the best administrative structure for the new mission that the Pope had recently given the Jesuits, that of combating atheism. It is not without interest that Arrupe’s practice during the retreat seems to have been to tear out of an old school exercise book a double sheet for each reflection. He would then sometimes find that he needed an extra sheet, or alternatively that he had space left over. There were also occasions when he divided up double sheets into single ones (there are four in all), to be used for his Memos on particular subjects.⁵

For an appreciation of the Retreat Notes it is important to accept them for what they are, and not expect to find here either a diary or the

³ His international training explains the traces of various languages (English, German and Latin for example) that emerge *en passant* in the Notes, while his predilection for little diagrams may stem from his familiarity with ideograms (fol. 22). His method of considering a problem, using the traditional scholastic system of argumentation (fol. 37), was learned while studying philosophy.

⁴ For a hypothetical reconstruction of the Retreat, see the table. Occasionally Arrupe mentions the time of meditation, e.g. 9.30, 4.30, 6.30 and midnight, but there may have been others. Most references will give the fol. numbers introduced by Iglesias, although with some misgivings as the term ‘folio’ normally refers to two pages (recto and verso of the folio).

⁵ Perhaps the most significant criticism of the present edition would be that the editor, despite his scrupulous attention to reproducing the original Notes, has omitted one element which seems important: the original numbering of the pages. From the four photographs he provides it is clear that the Notes are numbered (probably in pencil, apparently written by Arrupe himself), and indeed at one point Arrupe refers to them, p. 81, fol. 38: ‘Cf. 10, 1-3’. This may seem an academic point, but the continuous numbering given by Iglesias, which certainly facilitates references, may hide the divisions that break up these notes, and which are probably significant if one is to follow the sequence of Arrupe’s thoughts. Perhaps each page could have been reproduced as it appears in the Notes. Some minor errors: p. 108, note 49 the extra folio seems to have been inserted between fol. 30 and 31 (not 31-32); note 50, read ‘nota 8’ (not ‘nota 7’).



The Opening of the Manuscript

Elegido por Dios para ser General de la Compañía ad vitam.

Todos los dones y gracias han sido dados no para mí, sino para la Compañía y la Iglesia.
También los defectos deben ser considerados bajo esa luz y ver que debo corregirlos y evitar sus
periculosos efectos.

sort of ‘discernment logbook’, which is what St Ignatius left in his so-called *Spiritual Diary*.⁶ Instead these are disparate notes, linked because written while reflecting and praying about his new post, but never intended for anything but Arrupe’s own use;⁷ they would serve to remind him of graces received. He is not trying to arrive at some decision. Their content is striking mainly because of what it tells us of the inner life of Arrupe. At the same time, one cannot help but read them with hindsight, and see in them elements that would be characteristic of all his later work.

Key Characteristics

First some observations on the person who emerges from the Notes. The opening words are very revealing:

Chosen by God to be General of the Society *ad vitam* (as long as I live). All the gifts and graces have been granted not for myself, but for the Society and the Church. In addition all defects have to be considered in this light, and I have to see that I am obliged to correct them and avoid their pernicious influence. . . . The post of General presupposes that one is an instrument, a representative and channel for God and His graces, in order to carry out His plans by

⁶ Easily available in Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Personal Writings*, edited by Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 67-109.

⁷ At times one has to ask if some minor errors are due to misreadings of his Notes or errors in the original: e.g. p. 15, line 3 up, ‘Swain’ not ‘Schwain’?; p. 89, the English Assistant was Snoeck, misread perhaps as ‘Smock’?; fol. 2 and 40 ‘Detachment’ not ‘Dettachment’ or ‘detachment’?; fol. 6 ‘survey’ not ‘survey’?

means of the strongest organization in the Church. An enormous grace, but an enormous responsibility. (fol. 1)

Arrupe has had several months to bring home to himself that he is now the person in charge of what he sees as 'the strongest organization' in the Church. The grandeur of his charge is coupled with an acute awareness of its weight. Throughout the Notes one is struck by Arrupe's realisation of the breadth and enormous scope of the work both available to him, and required of him:

. . . if I can achieve that these extraordinary graces are poured out over the world, then we will have achieved a miracle of grace, because the effects will be extraordinary. (fol. 1)

I have to bring home to myself quite deliberately the immense possibilities, but at the same time the responsibility. (fol. 17)

This internal conviction (of the work before me) should lead me to a complete and utter surrender of myself; for its greatness, its transcendence for the whole world, its beauty, there is no enterprise that is more noble. (fol. 29)

The word *grande* is constantly recurring; at one point he simply writes of 'all things' (fol. 5). However, equally striking is the conviction, expressed on nearly every page, of his close link with Jesus Christ. It reaches its clearest expression on three occasions. Some extracts from each of these are worth quoting. At one point he is reflecting on the first quality stipulated in the *Constitutions* for the Superior General:

This [union with God Our Lord] is the fundamental quality: it is from here that all that is good for the General and for the Society has to spring. Therefore, every effort and diligence to acquire and foment this gift of Ignatian prayer will be all too little. Those experiences of contact with the 'ME' and of internal solitude with God are going in that direction. I must encourage as far as possible that spirit. It is in that internal solitude that the Lord communicates Himself and it is in that solitude and by means of it that 'intuitions', as St Ignatius styles them, come so that one can see things with great simplicity and clarity, along with a conviction that it is from God. (fol. 17)

Then we have a striking passage in some notes for Day 6 of the retreat, which happens to coincide with the First Friday of the month, and is therefore dedicated to the devotion to the Sacred Heart:⁸

My attitude to the Lord has to be one of the deepest humility and gratitude. The post for which He has chosen me requires an extraordinary purity of soul. Many reasons for this, but I find two particularly convincing: 1. Sheer gratitude obliges me to be utterly faithful to the Lord, in such a way that no matter what He asks of me, even the smallest thing, I cannot deny it to Him. Thus any sin, fault or voluntary imperfection must be absolutely excluded. How can I show myself niggardly with a Lord who has been so generous with me? How can I attempt to offend, or simply not please, the One who has placed such trust in me? 2. The need for the most intimate and continuous contact possible with the Lord obliges me to have the greatest purity of soul. It is the Lord who has to move and inspire me with His grace. Any misting over of the brightness that comes from a pure soul has the fatal consequence that it lessens contact with Him, and is moreover a darkening of my spirit that can impede my seeing the things God wants, in the way that He wants. That continuous seeing, envisaging, hearing . . . of Our Lord can only take place in a conscience that is as pure as possible. That continuous communication is absolutely indispensable for me if I am to be able to do my job well. The ability to hear the Lord and to understand His will properly requires a heart that is perfectly pure. *Beati mundi corde*. . . . Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God. (fol. 25)

The real presence of Christ, of my friend, of my *alter ego* [my second self], of my great chief, but at the same time of my intimate confidant. The task belongs to both of us: He informs me of His plans, His desires; my part is to collaborate 'externally' with His plans, which He has to bring about internally through His grace. How grandiose is the work that He places in my hands; this requires a complete union of hearts, an absolute identification. Always with Him! And He will never part from me! I have to show Him my utter trust and fidelity. Never to be separated from Him. But the root of all this lies in that *amor amicitiae* [the love that springs from friendship], the feeling that one is the *alter ego* of Jesus Christ. All

⁸ The fact that 6 August is also the feast of the Transfiguration seems to have passed unnoticed; Arrupe's personal devotion to Christ, very marked, lay more in the Western tradition of devotion to the Sacred Heart. By a curious coincidence, 6 August 1981 was also to be his last working day.

this with the deepest humility, but also with immense joy and happiness. I for ever with Him! Always hanging on His lips and His wishes! What a happy life! Thank you, my God! Here you have me, Lord! (fol. 28)

Then, in the Notes for the final day, we find the following:

It is quite certain that personal love for Christ is necessary and that an increase in that love is an increase both in graces personal to me and in the graces granted to the Society as a body. . . . How valuable is this idea! One has to become convinced of it in theory and in practice. Jesus is my true, perfect, ever-lasting friend. To Him I should give myself, and from Him I should receive His friendship, His support, His guidance. But also His intimacy, the repose, the conversation, the advice, the relief . . . ; the place is to be found before the tabernacle; Jesus Christ can never leave me. I always with Him. Lord, never let me leave you. *Et nunquam me a te separari permittas* (And never let me be parted from you). (fol. 49; the quotation derives from the *Anima Christi*)

Raised Eyebrows

Clearly these are only two of the personal aspects, which happen to have struck one reader of these Notes as fundamental. There are others which also appear striking, but for other reasons: they provoke question marks, or at least raised eyebrows. Perhaps the most obvious of these is Arrupe's clearly expressed notion that within the Society, which in his eyes is in need of invigorating,⁹ or even of reform,¹⁰ there should be formed 'suicide squads' of 'unconditionals' (fol. 5, 22).¹¹ At one point he thinks of the possibility of special houses, 'of intensive spirituality, poverty, abnegation' (fol. 22, 40). It is obvious that he has been inspired by the famous Japanese kamikaze squadrons. This 'all-or-nothing'

⁹ One expression he uses is *poner a tono*, fol. 21, 23, as one 'tones up' a muscle for a race, or 'tunes' a musical instrument.

¹⁰ Fol. 22, referring explicitly to poverty and the spiritual life. Fol. 39 mentions the Pope's new call to fight atheism: 'But at the same time, this activity, understood in all its depth, breadth and complexity, is the great force that can help to a true Reform [using this term with reference to the 'Reform' of the sixteenth century] and restructuring of the Society, as well as to a raising of its spirit'. He is convinced that the situation in 1965 has much in common with that faced by the Society at the time of the Counter-Reformation (fol. 35).

¹¹ Iglesias notes (note 10) that Arrupe used this kamikaze image on at least one public occasion.

attitude to the religious life is linked to his own personal ‘vow of perfection’:¹²

Now if ever, the vow of perfection takes on a most special urgency. Now I must keep this vow with utter diligence, as it is through this diligence that I will prepare myself to hear, see and be as an instrument of the Lord; this means to do in all things His will. He is the one who directs; I have nothing else to do but to listen. He inspires; I try to put this into execution; He corrects; I should amend both myself and others in a way that is visible (*executio*). (fol. 25)

Some may find this intensely voluntaristic attitude startling; it has to be seen in the context of a training received in the early twentieth-century Spanish spiritual tradition, and then it is not surprising to see that he accepts literally (fol. 27) the reference to ‘corpse-like’ obedience (*perinde ac cadaver*) that Paul VI lifted from the Jesuit Constitutions.¹³ Other traces of this attitude appear perhaps in his conviction that if a Jesuit is not prepared to accept the high enterprise of the Society, he should leave it (fol. 21): thus after outlining the virtues he considers necessary in a Jesuit—obedience, poverty, chastity, mortification, acceptance of community life—he adds:

That is to say, we should make evident the practical image of the Society today and insist on it, even at the price of losing members who will not adapt themselves to this. (fol. 24)

The importance of the papacy in Arrupe’s thought is such that some may find it exaggerated. He constantly refers to the ‘Roman Pontiff’ (fol. 7, 8), the ‘Highest Pontiff’ (fol. 23, 31), the ‘Holy Father’ (fol. 27, 33, 35), the ‘Vicar of Christ’ (fol. 29), the ‘Holy See’ (fol. 35, 36, 37), or simply the ‘Pope’ (fol. 7); and he copies out key passages of the Latin text of Paul VI’s address to the Congregation (fol. 29-31), clearly in order to reflect on them and pray about them word by word. The papal injunction against atheism fills his horizon, and is seen as the

¹²In another revealing note, Iglesias mentions that Arrupe had the habit of making daily confession with Fr Dezza, note 35, p. 105.

¹³*Constitutions*. VI.1.1 [547]; Paul VI, Speech in a private audience with Arrupe and his Assistants, July 17, 1965, *Acta Romana Societatis Jesu*, XIV (1965), p. 648. A reference and long quotation from this speech is included in Arrupe’s letter to the Society, 31 July 1965, and reproduced in ‘*Aquí me tienes, Señor*’ as Annex 5 (pp. 137-144, especially p. 144). Most commentators would regard this phrase as a misleading guide to the Ignatian notion of obedience.

great new mission of the Society. If ever the Pope had a devoted servant, it was Arrupe, which makes the later failure of trust between the papacy and Arrupe all the more tragic.¹⁴

Another perhaps discordant note is struck by his use of the Spanish term *naturalismo*, which he identifies as one of the great dangers facing the world, and in particular the Society.¹⁵ The best translation is probably 'secularism', an ideology that deliberately excludes all reference to the spiritual or supernatural. At this stage Arrupe is suspicious of 'erroneous concepts' concerning 'human rights' in the Society: '1) The concept of personal development; 2) the concept of liberty; 3) the concept of love' (fol. 41)—even if to balance this, he speaks positively of,

. . . [t]he desire for development of one's own qualities, with a conviction of one's personal responsibility; this will make collaboration personal and with a maximum sense of certainty. (fol. 41)

All the more remarkable then is the fact that Arrupe can write so broad-mindedly of topics like the sense of freedom:

The feeling of 'indifference' is that detachment from everything, one that gives a complete freedom of spirit, thus disposing the soul to the greatest availability under the action of the Holy Spirit, which is the greatest of all dynamic forces. (fol. 7)

One corollary of this is his conviction that the work of the missionary is not so much to 'save souls' as to impart a wealth of grace that otherwise will be lacking (fol. 6, 9). When discussing ministry and the knowledge of God, he notes:

. . . on this point you can leave aside the question of whether souls can be saved outside the Catholic Church. In our work we can—in a certain sense we have to—leave aside the ultimate effect, since this depends exclusively on the grace of God. I am working and

¹⁴ On 6 October 1981, Cardinal Casaroli, Secretary of State, entered Fr Arrupe's room at the Curia and briefly informed the sick man, on the orders of the Pope, that a personal delegate would take over the running of the Society; Fr Arrupe was found weeping. See Pedro Miguel Lamet, *Arrupe: una explosión en la Iglesia* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1989), p. 430.

¹⁵ The term emerges at many points in the Notes, sometimes as a synonym for 'atheism' (fol. 8, 23), at others as designating a more subtle danger within the Society, along with 'subjectivism' and 'false humanism' (fol. 14, 35-36, 38-40).

doing all I can in order to increase this knowledge among Christians and among pagans. What are the concrete results? An advance in virtue? A conversion? A soul being saved from Hell? I don't know. I have to work to increase the glory of God through the most effective means, and on behalf¹⁶ of those souls who might give greater glory to God, on the ground of their being in greater need, or of their being of special value. (fol. 9)

His page and a half of Notes on the missions (which would eventually inform an address on the subject to the Council) include the reflection that the future of the world lies with 'those nations that are numerically so superior and have such a great culture and other human qualities' (fol. 43). A new way of thinking about the missions is needed: we have to change the old idea, of 'work in countries that are culturally or technically retarded, with very primitive problems and using in the work means that are themselves very primitive' (fol. 43). One has to reject false apprehensions:

They say that by making this effort there is 'a danger of killing the goose'.¹⁷

No. 1) because these missionary enterprises provoke more vocations in Catholic countries;

2) because pagan countries, when they are converted, give in proportion just as many vocations as Catholic countries, or more—which is a great hope for the future. (fol. 44)

Of course another corollary is his impatience (fol. 40) with a narrow focus on individual interests, be they limited to a province or to an assistancy.¹⁸

A similar broadmindedness appears in his attitude to the Exercises themselves:¹⁹ he is quite happy to spend the first three days of his retreat with three reflections²⁰ on the opening text of the Spiritual Exercises, the Principle and Foundation, to help him focus on his new task; it is the continuous creative action of God that gives him joy and strength to face the future (fol. 2-12). Later he picks the key meditation

¹⁶ Arrupe uses the same word (*por*) where the English seems to require two expressions: 'through' and 'on behalf of', but some ambiguity remains.

¹⁷ The equivalent Spanish expression is 'to kill the hen' that lays the golden eggs.

¹⁸ A Jesuit administrative term that refers to a group of provinces.

¹⁹ Arrupe's flexibility in this regard has now become standard practice, but was more unusual in his day.

²⁰ The last two are clearly numbered in the text as IIa (fol. 5) and III (fol. 7).

of the Second Week, Two Standards,²¹ to home in on the new task that Paul VI has given the Society, the 'great battle' against atheism (fol. 21-24); but then he goes backwards, to the Call of the King contemplation which opens the Second Week, when he focuses specifically on Paul VI's Latin text (fol. 29).²²

The Ignatian Aspect

But Arrupe's deep fidelity to, and respect for, Ignatius himself is a constant feature of his Notes:

Lord, let me feel, as St Ignatius did, that creative activity present in every moment. (fol. 2)

. . . if we are to follow the example of St Ignatius, we have to see how he fought and reacted against the evils of his time. He tried to lay stress on the virtues, principles and practices opposed to those fought for by his adversaries, and he gave to the Society an organization and structure appropriate to the struggle of that age. (fol. 24)

He sees the need for an Ignatian spirituality (cf. especially fol. 36), but notes that this will require much reflection and study (fol. 39).

Fr Iglesias urges the reader (p. 24) not to try and link these Notes with the *Spiritual Diary* of St Ignatius; but Fr Gonzalez Modroño in his Prologue (p. 11) is the first to see that it is impossible not to. Both were composed by Jesuit Generals shortly after their election; both texts share the overpowering desire to be faithful to God's urgings; both are shot through with reminiscences of the *Spiritual Exercises*; both, though this is more true of the *Diary*, have a Trinitarian focus, and a deeply felt Christological centre. Thus, although Iglesias is quite right to warn against any crude comparison, or against the expectation that the two documents belong to the same genre, both texts are most helpful in their autobiographical content: they reveal the inner life of two exceptional men.

²¹ Also explicitly mentioned in the text (fol. 21).

²² Although an enthusiastic supporter of directed retreats, Arrupe himself only made his first such retreat in August 1980, and then suffered acute desolation, a sort of premonition of his stroke the following year: see Lamet, *Arrupe*, pp. 415-416.



Can one say of Arrupe on the basis of these Notes that he had anything like the mystical stature of Ignatius? There are a few hints. He refers in passing to ‘internal solitude’, and to the need for,

. . . prolonged prayer on one’s own (preferably at night)²³ and also for brief, but intense prayer, in difficult circumstances in which one asks from God the solution to a problem. (fol. 17)

Other quotations point in the same direction:

An elevation of spirit, seeing the world below and the Lord above. The struggle that is being carried on in the world as described in the Two Standards. (fol. 21)

. . . the words, another motive to increase within me the devotion to the Heart of Christ, since this is the source of extraordinary graces for one’s own sanctification. (fol. 26)

A deep and very clear feeling of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Jesus Christ is really present in the tabernacle. He, the Saviour of the world, the King of all creation, the Head of the Church and of the Society. He is there and he speaks to me, he guides me. (fol. 27)

Indeed, Arrupe himself refers to the *Diary* and to its account of exceptional Trinitarian intuitions and mystical gifts (fol. 28). He adds:

I need to be given light and direction by the Lord: the way and the measure are reserved to the Lord himself, but for my part I [yo underlined] have to do everything possible on my part to obtain from the Lord those lights that are so necessary for me at these moments, which are so difficult for the Church and for the Society. (fol. 28)

²³ At least one of his retreat meditations is recorded as having taken place at midnight (fol. 35).

Concluding Reflections

In the final remarks of his Introduction, Fr Iglesias writes: 'Arrupe is no hero' (p. 37). He is drawing attention to the human aspects of Arrupe, and to the great simplicity that was recognized by all who met him. He could laugh at himself; he could make mistakes; he could listen to others and learn from them. He was aware, apparently, that he might have problems with scruples.²⁴ These are all characteristics that clash with any idea of him as a 'superman', a sort of 'Napoleon' of the spiritual life. And yet . . .

One of the most moving features of these Retreat Notes is that they reveal a man dimly aware of the passion that awaits him, the ten years of enforced silence that would precede his death, but perhaps even worse, the misunderstanding and lack of trust that would bring tears to his eyes.²⁵ In the Notes he makes it clear that he is willing to give his all: mortification is a word that recurs more than once (fol. 21, 24). But it is on the final day that the intuition of what lies ahead becomes clearest:

The one thing that remains for ever and in every place, that which has to orient me and help me always, even in the most difficult circumstances and in the face of the most painful lack of understanding, is always the love of the sole friend, who is Jesus Christ. (fol. 49)

It is this intense love, appearing throughout the Notes, which explains the extraordinary final paragraphs. Here he is recording the enthusiasm which he feels in his heart; he uses the French word *élan* to express it—the leaping, dynamic energy which would inspire all his ventures as General. It comes from the love of Christ, and it is something which Arrupe feels he can share with his Society. He sees clearly that he must maintain two essential contacts: one with the Lord, the other with his brethren:

. . . hence the importance of personal contact, with Christ on the one hand and with the members of the Society on the other. . . . A great effort must be made to multiply and personalize the relations



²⁴ The reference is a passing one (fol. 41), and somewhat ambiguous.

²⁵ See note 14 above.

between the General and the Society and its members. Ignatius was able to do this because of the slight number of his subjects, despite the primitive means at his disposal; today that can be achieved to a great extent despite increased numbers thanks to progress in means of communication. In this area, no means and no expense should be spared; it is vital for the governing of the Society in the style of St Ignatius. (fol. 52)

So much more remains to be discovered in these brief Notes.²⁶ In his Introduction, Iglesias draws attention to the great variety of prayer-modes that they display: listening, considering, searching, relaxing, self-examining, reading, speaking, promising, planning. These proceed from a vibrant relationship which Arrupe expresses in a rich variety of terms: familiarity, union, contact, identification, presence, and above all love for the Lord.²⁷ Arrupe also has a striking reflection on the motto 'AMDG', the theme of the greater glory of God, so dear to Ignatius: what is this 'glory' but a greater knowledge and love of God (fol. 6, 9)? A recurring preoccupation is the need for *estudio* (fol. 23, 28, 37, 38, 39, 40), prolonged and concentrated study of the situation with its needs and remedies.²⁸ Similarly, he is convinced that a 'plan' is needed to give focus to the new work of the Society (fol. 7, 23, 29, 37). The intelligence of the man is constantly shining through, but at the same time, and even more strikingly, a remarkable holiness.

These are Retreat Notes that are exemplary in every way. In all likelihood they were written during the review periods that Ignatius recommends should follow the various exercises—contemplations and meditations—that make up the *Spiritual Exercises*.²⁹ Already in the sixteenth century, directors were recommending the usefulness of making written notes, as has been noticed by a recent commentator:

It may be of interest here to recall the attitude of the early directors towards writing during the Exercises, as summarized in the 1599 *Directory* (c. 3): the exercitant is encouraged to write what has to do with prayer and with what God communicates in or out of

²⁶ As one reviewer (Angel Tejerina) has noted, the better one knows the later writings of Arrupe, the more suggestive these Notes become: see *Manresa*, 74 (2002), p. 403.

²⁷ See p. 33.

²⁸ One project that figures in the Notes is his plan to conduct a world-wide sociological 'survey' (fol. 5); this was realised, but Iglesias notes that the results were very uneven (p. 99, note 7).

²⁹ 'After finishing the exercise I will either sit down or walk around for a quarter of an hour while I see how things have gone for me during the contemplation or meditation.' (Exx. 77)

meditation; desires or resolutions; truths or insights; matter bearing on subjects of meditation. Things 'should be noted very briefly, not diffusely after the manner of a discourse', and once again writing must not obtrude on time for meditation or the preparation of it.³⁰

Arrupe is speaking to himself as he writes these Notes, and one should always bear this in mind while reading them; he is exploring, recording, tasting, acknowledging. It is a rare privilege to be allowed to come so close to the inner workings of his mind and heart, but it is also a responsibility. One can only hope that his readers will be worthy of such a gift.

Joseph A. Munitiz SJ claims Basque descent like Fr Arrupe. He celebrated fifty years as a Jesuit in the millennium year, having worked mainly in the field of Byzantine studies, and is now assistant to the Novice Director in Manresa House, Birmingham. His published works include translations of St Ignatius, and other translations of early Jesuit sources are under way.

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³⁰Michael Ivens, SJ, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Gracewing: Leominster, 1998), p. 87, n. 27. See Martin E. Palmer, *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), p. 297.

FOLLOWING CHRIST IN WORD AND GESTURE

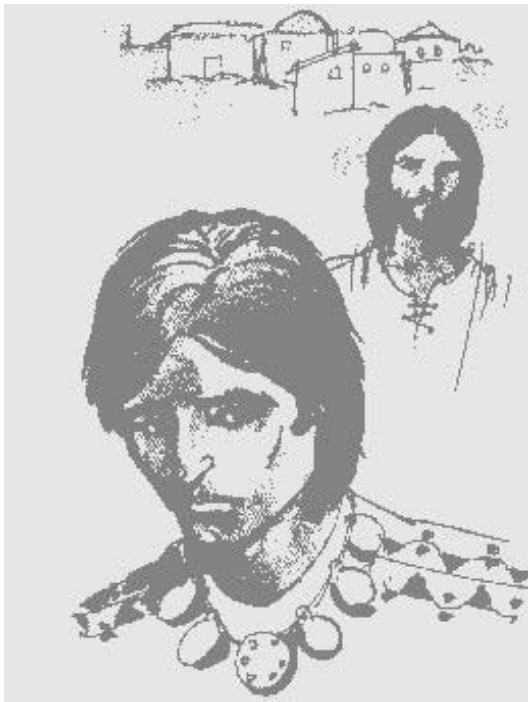
Karl Frielingsdorf

NOT LONG AGO I SPOKE WITH SOME RELIGIOUS who were responsible for formation, both initial and continuing, in their congregations. We were talking about what it meant to be committed to Christ. I was amazed by the many different views that seemed to be around. Some were coming from an experience of the Ignatian Exercises, and spoke about how the following of Jesus Christ should shape their way of life. Others emphasized the crucified and suffering Christ, in line with the biblical injunction: 'if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' (Mark 8:34). Then there were more sceptical voices, saying that this understanding of the following of Christ was in danger of falling victim to 'negative asceticism'; before we knew where we were, we would be back to religious life as it was before Vatican II, to disciplines and chains. The following of Christ is about making visible Christ's liberating, life-giving message; if there is any place for asceticism, it should be something to do with grace, a way of attuning ourselves to God's grace as it encounters our weakness.

Others still were nervous about too christological an account; they spoke about a danger that traditional devotion to Christ would get in the way of our finding our own path in life. We need something more in keeping with the way we understand life today, and with contemporary language. Commitment must take on a different form, in keeping with the changed situation of Christianity in our secularised society. This society is quite prepared to promote meditation, but there is no longer any necessary connection between such practices and a relationship with Christ. Our experiential culture takes its lead from what human beings say they need, and subordinates everything else, even religion, to the motto, 'live your own life'. Moreover, such expressions as 'Reign of God', 'Jesus Christ, Son of God and Saviour of the World' may once have been common coin, but have now long ceased to make any sense

to people, even those who are still going to church. Commitment today involves the challenge of leaving the Christian ghetto-world, and of embracing wholeheartedly the challenges raised by our time. We need to recognise how many of our contemporaries are seeking God even when they have lost touch with Christian resources such as the idea of discipleship; we need to experience in our own bodies the ways in which the 'divine' shows itself in people's everyday experience. Then again, others said: 'we are all searching together on the road. Jesus is for us an important model in our quest for God, and his human actions and ways of relating give us some important leads.'

There were also those who saw Christian commitment in terms of Jesus' challenge to give up all our possessions and live in poverty as an act of solidarity with the poorest of the poor—with those to whom



above all Jesus had promised the Reign of God. This way of thinking about poverty led to further reflections, especially that Jesus' challenge was directed towards liberating those who hold on to their riches and will not let go. Wealth involves a lack of freedom for God and for other people which goes against our simple baptismal commitments, and against the command to love our neighbour, ourselves, and our God. Christian commitment centres fundamentally around

relationships, as we see from the rich young man (Mark 10:17-22) who wants to follow Jesus, but does not want to give up his possessions. When he realises what commitment to Jesus involves, he goes away sad, because of his great wealth.

When our conversation finished, it was clear that we had talked about some important models for understanding commitment to Christ, models that can be found at various points in the tradition of the last 2,000 years. Vatican II has probably retrieved the most healthy aspects of the tradition in speaking of the universal call to holiness. From this it

follows that Christian commitment or discipleship is not restricted to any one particular state in life. Rather, it is based on each of us giving *our own* answer to an invitation, irrespective of the decisions about our lives to which the answer may lead. Even Paul points out how the call of all to discipleship can be lived out in different ways: in celibacy or in marriage; in community or on one's own. There are different spiritual gifts, ministerial services, and levels of authority.¹ Vatican II's *Lumen gentium* puts the point like this:

. . . all those who believe in Christ, whatever their condition or rank, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity. And this sanctity is conducive to a more human way of living even in society here on earth. To attain this perfection, believers should exert their strength in the measure in which they have received this as Christ's gift, so that, following in his footsteps and forming themselves in his likeness, obedient in all things to the Father's will, they may be wholeheartedly devoted to the glory of God and the service of their neighbour. In this way, the holiness of the people of God will produce fruit in abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the church by the lives of so many saints.²

But what is all this supposed to mean in an age when churchy language has become virtually unintelligible?

Christian Commitment and Fulfilment

What do we need, psychologically and spiritually, in order to live out Christian commitment so that it leads to the fulfilment of our identity, to a life lived in abundance? Speaking theologically, a fulfilled identity is the logical consequence of a life well spent in Christian commitment; it involves a fundamental orientation towards God and gives the whole of our lives a new direction:

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)

¹ 1 Corinthians 12:4-30; 7:25-40.

² *Lumen gentium*, n. 40, translation based on that in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, edited by Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990).

This teaching applies to the deepest levels of the human person. What is at stake here is not primarily a new ethics, but rather a new self-understanding. Life is not to be built on anxiety and on self-protection; rather, it should be a series of ever new beginnings in hope and trust. This implies conversion, letting go, dying and being reborn: 'no one can see the kingdom of God without being born anew' (John 3:3). And this has always been understood as the work of the Spirit, leading us from chaos to cosmos.

If this general vision is accepted, then it is very important how we have come to terms with our own life-history, and how far we are at peace with it. For example, women and men who have opted for the following of Christ through the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in a religious order often find it helpful to become conscious of how their motivations for entering were rooted in their own life history. Thus they recognise both how they might grow and where their blocks are. In crisis situations, awareness of the patterns and the traps latent in their own life-situations can become an important step towards a solution. Quite often it is only after years of belonging to a congregation that unrecognised and unconscious motivation comes to the surface. It presses into the forefront of felt awareness, into our patterns of relating, and into our dealings with God. For example, a difficult community situation can trigger memories of a childhood vulnerability or a problematic family situation. Back then, the only solution seemed to be: 'get out of this wretched family, so as to find the security and love you need in a new one'. This kind of motivation has often led people to flee into religious life, in the hope of experiencing there what they never experienced in their childhood.

Unconscious motives may take years to surface

Another unconscious motivation can be fear of intimacy or of living as a couple. Quite often this arises from an unresolved set of problems about sexuality, or from the experience of having parents who did not get on: 'better to live alone than in the kind of relationship my parents had'. This kind of unconscious motivation can remain hidden or be given a pious legitimisation: it gets smothered by religious ideology about living in brotherly or sisterly love, or about the vow of chastity as a love exclusively directed towards God and Jesus. When this happens, people find it difficult to develop their personalities in freedom, and to develop their relationship with God. This dynamic can also arise when guilt feelings within a family are transmitted tacitly from generation to

generation—for example regarding an illegitimate child, a suicide, a crime, or unacknowledged sexual abuse. Someone in a later generation may take the guilt on to themselves, and then unconsciously seek to ‘atone’ for it to God by following Christ in a religious institute.

When all these things happen, spirituality is dealing with ordinary human experiences, but without people recognising what belongs where. What is coming from one’s own unconscious desires and longings, rooted in wounds and hurts suffered long ago? And what can we ascribe to the call of God? Of course there is nothing which God cannot use to draw us into Christian commitment—nothing is in principle excluded from God’s action. And yet we must be very clear and discriminating as we try to recognise how God sets the divine call in specific human situations. This ‘discrimination of spirits’ is advisable whenever anyone is making a permanent decision as to a particular way of following Jesus. There are traps and temptations arising from our hurts and our limitations. More importantly, we need to discover what has come to be our own life through the course of our personal history: the possibilities and limits that this entails, the strengths and weaknesses, the painful experiences, and the sources of salvation hidden in our wounds. This is how the following of Christ leads to life in abundance. If we can say yes to our own life and to what it has become, this enables a reconciliation to happen. And this reconciliation lets us mature into the personal identities that God has placed within us.

Relationship Taking Shape

We cannot talk about truly following Christ unless we have a relationship with Jesus that is quite personal and specific, dynamic, growing, maturing. When we are considering questions of vocation, we need to look at this personal relationship and to name it explicitly. How do I experience Jesus and speak with him? As Lord? As master? As saviour? As redeemer? As brother? As companion on the way? As friend? As lover? How is the answer to this question reflected in my vocation?

Over the past few years, as I have been running courses for training spiritual directors, I have developed the following exercise. It helps us look at these questions regarding relationship and vocation.

The person who wants to work on their relationship to Jesus chooses another member of the group, who represents their past life. A further person plays Jesus in the exercise. A fourth person is asked to observe and re-enact what happens later, so that the person doing the exercise can see the role-play from a distance. There are several steps.

The Call and the Turning to Jesus

The first phase of the exercise is about the initial call, and about how I first turned to Jesus. I start by standing in front of the person representing my past life. I try to express bodily whether, and if so how, I can accept what my previous life has been, and how far I am at peace with it.

Behind me stands Jesus, as represented by another member of the group. Jesus looks at me from behind and touches me gently on the shoulder. I turn my head and look at Jesus, while keeping the rest of my body facing my past life. Jesus says, 'follow me!' Then Jesus turns round. I am now being asked to take a decision. Either I stay with my life as it has been so far, with my past. Or I turn round and move towards Jesus in order to follow him. I look at my past and at everything that makes up life for me at present. If I feel the impulse to turn towards Jesus, I say goodbye to my past life and deliberately turn my back. I try to become aware of these movements in my body, to acknowledge them, and to notice how I react to them. I set off on my new way. I place myself behind Jesus.

Discipleship

In the second part, I am meant to notice how I stand behind Jesus, and to discover the most appropriate mixture of intimacy and distance. I notice in my body when and how I can come closer to Jesus. If I stand directly behind Jesus, I should stretch out first the right hand and then the left towards him, and try to touch him. I might touch Jesus' back, and try to feel who this Jesus is that I want to follow. Can I trust him? If I feel that I trust Jesus so far, and want to know more about him, Jesus turns towards me, looks at me lovingly, and says once again, 'follow me'.

At this point, there is another important decision for me to make. Where is this 'following' going to lead? Some stay behind Jesus, and follow him in the sense of following his footsteps as he moves on. They are always looking downwards. Others stay where they are for the time being; it feels right for them to stay where they are. Others again move

up by his side; they no longer simply follow behind. Still others may turn round at this point, and go back to their past life.

Companionship on the Way

Whatever step I take, Jesus looks at me and invites me again, if only by facial expression: 'follow me'. I decide what seems right at this point. Move forward? If so, then Jesus invites me to walk alongside him. I then opt to walk either on Jesus' right or left, once again working out the appropriate mixture of closeness and distance. People generally experience greater closeness and intimacy if they stand with their left side next to the other person. Once I have found the appropriate position by Jesus' side, we both move forward for a while as companions. If I can go further along the way, Jesus looks at me yet again, and comes closer to me. I work out whether, and how far, I can go along with this movement of Jesus, and I follow the movement for as long as seems right. If I am at the point of standing face to face with Jesus, then the person playing Jesus should try to use their eyes to express their relationship with me, and invite me yet again: 'follow me'. I work out whether, and how far, I can follow Jesus' eyes into a relationship. This eye contact can also lead to a dialogue or colloquy.

Friendship

If I am able and willing to take a further step in following Christ, Jesus then stretches out his left hand towards me, once again with the words, 'follow me'. I work out whether, and how far, I want to respond to this gesture of Jesus. If I want to go further, I stretch out my right hand towards Jesus until my fingertips are touching his. Then I put my right hand in Jesus' left. If it seems right, Jesus then stretches out his own right hand towards me, and I gently place my left hand, inch by inch, in Jesus' right hand.

These steps require a sensitivity to the appropriateness or otherwise of individual movements. It is therefore important that the process be slow and careful. One technique that can help people decide about appropriateness is that of asking various parts of their body, focussing on various parts of the body and asking them—eyes, left hand, or whatever—'what do you think?'

Love

If I want to go even further, then Jesus moves a step closer to me and says, yet again, 'follow me'. With this, Jesus' hands move up my arms to my shoulders, and I must then reflect on what to do next. This movement leads me even closer to Jesus and to a heartfelt embrace. When the significance of the gesture has been fully felt in all its richness, Jesus gradually releases the embrace, lets go, steps back and looks again at me. I receive the look, and let it sink in. Then Jesus lays a hand on my heart, while I decide what would be an appropriate response. Then I try to place my head on Jesus' heart, feel his heartbeat, and let this contact with Jesus' heart have its effect on me. This helps me to see that Jesus has a heart for me, that Jesus' heart is beating for me. Again, a dialogue may express what is going on.



After a while, once this phase of close relationship seems to be coming to an end, Jesus breaks the bodily contact and frees himself. He looks at me; I receive the look and answer with whatever gesture seems right. It can help at this stage if I place my hands on my own stomach, and follow through the intense encounter, relishing it, appropriating it in my body and in my emotional memory. I can perhaps express this verbally: 'Jesus cares about me; Jesus loves me'. When I am ready to do so, I let my hands fall to my sides. Jesus looks at me and then turns his gaze towards other people, towards the world that is now opening up to the two of us.

Mission

Then Jesus stretches out his right hand, and points to where his people are. Jesus sends me into the world, to other people, so that I can bear witness to what they have experienced of the love of God. I take up this invitation, feeling the relationship to Jesus that still lies within, and its latent power. Then I turn my gaze away from Jesus, turn right round, and go to the people in the power of this personal relationship with Jesus, in order to share God's love with them and to proclaim the Good News to them. It is always important for me to be turning back towards my personal relationship with Jesus, and drawing on its power for the mission that flows from my being called by him.

This dramatic exercise in discipleship and personal relationship can help us to recognise the different steps on the way, and to see where we currently stand, where our next step is. The physical enactment, and the time taken to feel what is happening and what is appropriate, can help us represent our relationship with Jesus more authentically and integrally. As the bodily experiences are expressed verbally, the content takes flesh, and becomes more earthed. These experiences demonstrate the particular contours of my relationship with Jesus. Moreover, my blocks and my yearnings can be more purposefully expressed, and I can move forward with them appropriately.

The Fruits of this Exercise*Personal Encounter*

Without a personal encounter with Jesus, in which God's intentions for me become something I can feel—the fact that God has placed the divine Spirit, the divine love, the divine word in my heart—the following of Christ is impossible. Without this personal encounter, we are in danger of living our vocations and proclaiming the Gospel only in our own strength and out of our own resources.

Thus there is an important significance in how I stand behind Jesus, how I come alongside him, how I turn my body towards him so that we can meet face to face. I can only proclaim Jesus' Good News to other people when I have interiorised it for myself in encounter with Jesus.

As we grow spiritually, this encounter can become deeper and more intimate, to the point of a heartfelt embrace. If I stay behind Jesus in his shadow, or if I only pay passing respect to him before running off to

other people in order, allegedly, to proclaim him, there is something important lacking: the lived encounter with Jesus, through which his word 'becomes flesh' in me, and makes its home in me. And it is on this that a living proclamation depends.

A Dynamic Way

The exercise shows that Christian commitment, following Jesus, is a constantly changing way. It depends on constantly new personal encounters with Jesus. There is always scope for returning to Jesus in order to draw new strength and for letting my proclamation be deepened in him and through him. This is what happens at times of recollection, in retreats, and in daily prayer and meditation.

When we are threatened or in doubt, when we are in vocational crisis, we can sometimes need to get back behind Jesus in order to feel anew his humanity, his turning to us, his kindness. Then a new and deeper encounter and mission can emerge. It is important at times of crisis not to let Jesus out of our sight, not to take any over-hasty steps, and to discern the spirits well.

The Varieties of Letting Go

In the first phase, that of letting go of the past, and of saying goodbye to my past life, various things can happen. In the exercise described above, it is a member of the group who represents my past life; but a chair can also be used for that purpose. Some people just sit in the chair, look at Jesus' back, carry out their spiritual duties, and proclaim the Good News from that sitting position. They lack the courage to make the breakthrough, to move forward in an Exodus away from life as it has been. If Jesus taps me on the shoulder from behind with his left hand while I am still enmeshed in my past life, and looks at me lovingly, then I am being invited to make a decision, like that of the rich young man. Am I prepared to let go of my past life? Am I prepared to accept it for what it is and has been, and not just stare at it or try to correct something in it, not try to make up for what I have not had or lament my wounds? I am being invited to accept my life as it is, and then turn my attention to Jesus and follow him. The question is: am I ready for conversion, for a breakthrough, or do I stay in my chair? I might perhaps take hold of my life and move towards Jesus, but then place this past life between myself and him, so that no direct encounter is possible.

I need to work through my past and through the wounds I have inherited from my parents; otherwise I am in danger of transferring unconsciously the anxieties, resistances, and old relationship patterns onto Jesus. Jesus is different from my mother and father. What he says is affirming, liberating. This is why the moments of loving, trustful contact with Jesus are so significant.

Let me give a few examples. If I have a mother who has beaten and humiliated me, then I need to feel Jesus' right hand, and sense that his hand is not going to hit me as hers did. If I was somehow 'got rid of' as a child, I need to have a good look at Jesus' feet, and see whether or not he is going to kick me out as my father did. If I was emotionally or sexually abused, it can be helpful to feel Jesus' heart, and see whether I can rely on it, and check out whether Jesus might not be different from my parents, whether Jesus is reliable, whether his heart is open to me. If my mother constantly cold-shouldered and neglected me, it is good to see what Jesus' heart and shoulders are like. It is only when I have felt and touched a Jesus who is quite different from my parents that I can dare to trust his gaze and move alongside him, and indeed draw near to him in a genuine encounter.

Patterns of Following

In the different courses in which I have used this exercise, certain patterns of relating have repeatedly surfaced. Some people take the idea of 'following Christ' literally, and simply remain behind him. Generally they look downwards; they walk in his footsteps. They do not look ahead, or think about what the next step might be. They never leave Jesus' shadow. They may speak of a hesitancy about trusting their own impulses, or about taking on responsibility; of their habit of holding back and adapting to others; about fear of personal encounter and of too much intimacy with Jesus; about their doubt that this relationship should be happening; about how they cannot feel loved; about their fear of being rejected and sent away as so often before. Here it is important to go back to wherever they have felt some sort of confidence about trusting what is in them, and to take the next step from that position.

Others go through the whole process, right through to mission, like wildfire. They do not reflect on the various stages, or shape the next step according to what has gone before. Even when they stand behind Jesus, they touch Jesus' back, and move away behind him. They cast a

quick glance at Jesus and then run past him to other people, without having really encountered him. Yet encounter with Jesus, and a mature personal relationship are quite essential elements in mission. If these are neglected, or dealt with only perfunctorily, there will be a danger of burning out. Words about the love of God in Jesus will be empty, because the fire burns only when the relationship is alive.

For others it is difficult to let go of Jesus' embrace. They want to stay in the embrace of Jesus' heart, with their eyes closed. They cannot make the step into a specific mission, into the proclamation of the Good News, into bringing forth fruit. Often this indicates a worry that Jesus will not love them any more if they let go of him, or else a nervousness about taking responsibility.

Avoiding Judgment

As we feel our way forward, and shape our own path in the following of Jesus, evaluative judgments—is this good or bad, true or false?—are out of place. The only criterion we will ever need is whether or not the step 'fits'. Then we can ask: 'How are we trying to shape our relationship by making this step? What is holding me back from shaping it as I would like to? What do I still need if I am to shape it as I would like to?' For everyone is called to set out on this way of following Christ quite personally, and to map out their own way. They must respond to the gifts of grace that fall like seedcorn into their life, with all the opportunities and limitations of that life history as it has been so far. Then they grow, ripen, and bear fruit. It is in this context that the exercise in discipleship takes on its full significance. It helps us to discern the spirits, to decide where we take our place in our own discipleship of Christ here and now, and to work out the next steps along the way of spiritual growth.³

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‘WE SHALL BE CHANGED’

Vincent Gillespie

In memoriam

George Anthony Gillespie 29 October 1922–21 March 2000

Florence Doreen Gillespie 2 July 1924–12 April 2000

WHEN I WAS AN UNDERGRADUATE AT OXFORD IN THE 1970s, the preaching of Austin Farrer still had a high reputation. One of Farrer’s published sermons has stuck in my mind to this day. He described, as I recall, travelling on the London Underground, and noticing among the advertisements that line the escalators a glossy photograph of women’s corsetry carrying the slogan: ‘for uplift, for comfort, for general support’. ‘Isn’t this’, said Farrer, ‘rather like the Church of England: for uplift, for comfort, for general support?’

When both my parents died within three weeks of each other,¹ I felt in need of some of that spiritual corsetry, that uplift, comfort and general support. But it was not solid, coherent support that came to me. I noticed, instead, that my subconscious—as is often the case when the conscious mind is occupied with practical things—had taken to sorting through the debris of ideas, images, quotations, and clichés that clutter up my memory. Certain key phrases and images started coming to the surface over and over again. I was reminded of Eliot’s line: ‘These fragments I have shored against my ruins’.

Two key images emerged as the nuclei around which my thinking gradually coalesced. Both are commonplaces in Christian thought—clichés in the literature of bereavement. But thinking through the shape and trajectory of these images helped me understand more clearly why they were such commonplaces, and how they have become so dominant in the repertoire of Christian consolation.

¹ This piece was originally preached as a Sermon before the University of Oxford on 21 May 2000.

The first image comes in St Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15:

Lo, I tell you a mystery! We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

The second also comes from St Paul, this time his letter to the Philippians:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not think equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death—even to the death of the cross. Therefore God has also highly exalted him and given him a name which is above all names. (Philippians 2:5-11)

The Twinkling Trumpet

These quotations worked on my imagination in interlocking ways. The beautiful invocation of changed and transfigured bodies in the first passage, with its emphasis on the easiness of the transformation (‘in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye’) is, of course, the New Testament reading for the funeral service in the *Book of Common Prayer*. But the apparent ease of that transformation is what often strikes me as difficult about it. Few people who have watched a loved one die can describe the process as easy or happening ‘in the twinkling of an eye’, however peaceful the final stages may be. Letting go of the world is hard work.

Paul is here juxtaposing two images with quite different suggestions: the twinkling of an eye, and the last trumpet. What he is doing here is, I think, close to what we find in Malory’s *Morte D’Arthur*. Unable to adjudicate between the different mythologies of the death of Arthur circulating in mid-15th century England, Malory refuses to place his authority behind any of them and merely says, portentously but opaquely, that ‘in this world he changed his life’. Life is changed, not ended. The last trumpet is in fact more of a wake-up call to the changed souls who are now raised imperishable than a last post sounded over the dead. The theology of the passage is clear enough: the

dead are acted upon by the power of God; the change happens to them, they *are* raised. Paul's comments echo Isaiah's, 'He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces', and are later echoed themselves in the Book of Revelation:

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.²

And this is a change once and for all: the final escape from time and causality, from change and decay. The changed soul is now imperishable and impassible.

Milton uses a very similar rhetorical trick at the end of his *Lycidas*. Drawing on both classical and Christian imagery, Milton imagines his hero in a place where the saints will 'wipe the tears forever from his eyes'. Some of his lines have perfect balance and symmetry:

Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed.

But then the rhythm begins to quicken:

And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore,
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.

'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye', Milton has been able to enforce a change of tone for his poem from notes of grief to those of joy, not least by the burst of energy he loads into the verb 'flames' at the beginning of that line. That word explodes into a roar of kinetic force that powers the rest of the poem:

So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high
Through the dear might of him that walked the waves.

And yet—it all seems a bit neat, almost glib. The paradox of death neatly swallowed up in victory is hard to take at face value, or to sustain for very long with any satisfaction. It can feel like a triumph of hope

² Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:4.

over experience, and a very temporary triumph at that. 'Behold I make all things new!' can feel like 'With one bound he was free'.

Christ's Self-Emptying

Milton's replaying of this image also positions him close to my second strong image, the great song in Philippians which Christian tradition has interpreted in terms of the self-emptying love of Christ, and which has as its basic shape an inverted parabola of descent to death and ascent to exaltation. And it is when we look at this passage that some of the apparent glibness, or at least over-simplification, in the first passage comes into wider focus. As in the passage from 1 Corinthians, where it is God who changes and raises those who sleep, so here it is God who exalts the humbled Jesus with the name above all names. But Philippians, unlike 1 Corinthians, sets the paradox within a whole chain of actions culminating in the central paradox of self-emptying and exaltation, of humiliation and reward.

Even the syntax of the Philippians passage reflects how Christ's exaltation is causally *dependent* on his death, and in particular on its shamefulness. In the first place, we have Christ not grasping his undoubted equality with God, but humbling himself, emptying himself even, to take the form of a servant. In not grasping at his changelessly divine equality, Christ open-handedly identifies himself with those exposed to the buffeting of time, change and suffering in a fallen world. He becomes open to and subject to change. 'Change and decay in all around I see', says a familiar hymn, 'help of the helpless, O abide with me'. Christ abides with and sides with the helpless through the incarnation by releasing his grip on divinity. And his state of mind in doing this—his self-emptying, unconditional love, obedience and humility—is a model of what all Christians should strive to find in themselves as they try to deal with that changing and fallen world. Paul dramatizes succinctly how Christ helps the helpless: by becoming in some sense helpless himself under absolute obedience to the divine will; by becoming a suffering servant whose service leads to perfect freedom. The tears that will be wiped dry after death are the 'tears of things', what Virgil called *lacrimae rerum*. They are nothing more than the human condition, 'mourning and weeping in this vale of tears'.

The shape of falling and rising appeals, I suppose, because it is the archetypal and mythical shape of the route map to Christian salvation,

deeply etched into the restlessness of our subconscious minds. It is a plot trajectory that surprisingly mixes elements of tragedy and comedy. The human tragedy of the Fall and Calvary leads unexpectedly to the divine comedy of the transfigured Christ: a *felix culpa* indeed. It points to the paradox of enduring change, and to the need for actively engaging with change in this life, before we can hope to be changed finally and irrevocably in the twinkling moment of the last trump.

At a time of grief, however, it was just one tangent of the arc of that passage that caught my attention: he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. The Greeks called this *kenosis*: self-emptying, a kind of willed will-lessness, a sort of emphatic will not to have a separate will but to discover and co-operate in the will of God, a technique of resistance against the world of change and decay enabling weakness to become strength.

But this self-emptying is perhaps also particularly close to the process one observes in those who are dying: a death to the self, as well as a death to the world; a slow and not always unproblematic or easy surrender of the will to the greater strength of illness, of death and of whatever lies behind. What led me to this link was watching my father take communion from hospital chaplains in the final days of his life. Before receiving the host, he would say, slowly, deliberately and fighting against increasing shortness of breath: 'Lord I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed' (Matthew 8:8). What kind of faith could pray for healing in such a situation? What kind of healing could flow from such a prayer? What kind of humility, spiritual openness and obedience could lead to such hopeful confidence?

The prayer derives, of course, from the words of the centurion who asks Jesus for long-distance healing of his valued servant. Jesus says he is willing to come in person and heal him, and the centurion replies (in Matthew's version): 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed'. The centurion is amazed at the humility of Jesus in his willingness to come in person, to show solidarity with another suffering servant. So the healing that comes from the use of that prayer arises partly from the recognition of Jesus as a fellow sufferer, 'in human likeness . . . human form', who shares in our griefs, sufferings and fears, and joins with us in the broken Eucharist of death.

Kenosis, self-emptying, openness to change, is, like dying itself, very hard work. It is not the work of a moment, certainly not achieved in

the twinkling of an eye. Rather it is the work of a lifetime, and a life's work that is hard, full of doubt, and challenging. Even Jesus had his Garden of Gethsemane when the awfulness of what awaited him the next day flooded in and almost swamped the kenotic void of his spirit: 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want'. Surely few can face death without similar thoughts passing through their mind.

However, humility and obedience are much more muscular virtues than they might appear. They are also, again paradoxically, active and energetic. 'Gentle Jesus meek and mild' is a long way from the self-emptying hero of Philippians. And the heroism of Christ at Gethsemane in submitting his will to the will of God—'yet, not what I want, but what you want'—is a heroic gesture we glibly and unthinkingly repeat every time we say in the Lord's prayer: 'Thy will be done'. Allowing the will of God to work in our will is never easy or comfortable. As a recent advertisement said (not one for women's underwear): 'Don't you just love being in control'. We never are in control in this world: change is. But giving up the illusion of control is never easily accomplished, perhaps especially at the end of life.

Julian of Norwich and the Annunciation

Julian of Norwich, the fourteenth-century English mystic, realised this when she used the image of the Annunciation to express her own sudden realisation—'conception' is the word she uses—of God's grace working inside her, leading her to seek for him more deeply. The image of Mary sitting in her room and meekly responding to the Angel's message has become in our minds deeply feminised, and softened almost out of existence. But in the middle ages it was an image of real force and power, which spoke to men and women with equal ferocity and suddenness. 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word.'

Imagine the shock of what was being asked of Mary, the magnitude of the changes it introduced into her life, and the obedient humility with which she responded to it: the room of the Annunciation was Mary's Garden of Gethsemane. It is no accident that the feast of the Annunciation, 25 March was observed in the early Middle Ages as the calendar anniversary of the date of the Crucifixion. The link between the two celebrations brings out the parallels between them. Both the

Crucifixion and the Annunciation are responses to divine command. Mary and Christ both humble themselves; both refuse to act contrary to the Lord's word; both pay a great price for their obedience. Mary in her inner room and Christ in Gethsemane both face the challenge of obedient humility and rise to it. Both express and embrace a self-emptying love. No wonder Julian could write of Christ as our Mother: both take on themselves the roles of servants who suffer and are obedient in their co-operation with the will of God. Mary is a human anticipation of Christ's gesture, which then becomes a model for all men and women to admire and emulate. Her selfless love and obedient humility is rewarded by the exaltation that calls her Queen of Heaven and Star of the Sea. But we often lose sight of the toughness and heroic will that are implied by her actions at the Annunciation, as well as in accepting her sword of sorrow at the foot of the Cross. There was nothing easy or tranquil about her route to exaltation. That is why the medieval church saw her as a figure that Christians could identify with in their own sorrows and uncertainties.

***Letting go of the
world is hard;
discerning the
will of God is
tough work***

The Annunciation, therefore, joins my repertoire of key images that illuminate and comment on each other. No wonder the Catholic tradition asks Mary to 'pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death', for it is perhaps in death that most of us come face to face most starkly with the reality of what kenotic self-emptying is really all about. Letting go of the world is hard to do; discerning and co-operating with the will of God is tough work. Moreover, just as that paradoxical trajectory of humility leading to exaltation links Mary at the Annunciation with Christ at Gethsemane, so its shape is more covertly encoded by Scripture in other, less visible, ways.

Take the Beatitudes, for example. At face value they represent tightly packed verbal paradoxes, and trite inversions of human logic: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs'; 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'. In fact, however, they express gnominically the humility and exaltation depicted more vividly in the passages we have already looked at. Poverty of spirit and purity of heart are attributes of the human will that has actively sought to discover and facilitate the will of God. These prayers promise not redress for social or political disadvantage, but rather a clear sight of Heaven, when, faces wiped dry of tears, we shall be changed utterly and will hear the Lord saying 'Behold I make all things new'. But even these

formulations can sound glib and contractual. We need strong images to help us realise how hard it is to make the Passover from tears to joy. It is the work of a lifetime to journey towards the twinkling of the eye. And not everyone's life's work is a masterpiece. For many of us, our time in the Garden of Gethsemane is lengthy and anxious: 'my soul is very sorrowful even unto death'.

Perhaps the most remarkable dramatization is the one explored at length by Julian of Norwich in her meditation on the dying Christ. She sees him hanging on the cross, apparently moments from death. Remarkable because it pulls together both the key passages I have talked about here and synthesizes the imagery in a way that shows astonishing powers of control over the resonances of words and images. I don't think there can be much doubt that Julian had seen people die, and I don't think there can be much doubt that any one who has sat at a deathbed will identify with the way she describes time passing with aching slowness towards a conclusion that is both dreaded and, paradoxically, longed for; the way that objects looked at with the intensity of grief start to become disembodied and distorted over time; the way that the face of a dying person changes subtly and slowly over the days and hours before death; the changing colours of a face close to death, and after death. All this is reported and visualised by Julian with honesty and power in her account of Christ's last hours:

This long pining seemed to me as if he had been dead for seven nights, but still dying, at the point of passing away, suffering the last pain.³

There is nothing discreet or sanitised about her account of Christ's dying. Christ's death is brutal, slow and anguished. It is at once as if he has been seven nights dead and also 'continually dying'. The event seems to be both already completed and apparently endless, a kind of waking nightmare.

Julian sees the final agony of Christ as a moment poised between life and death, a moment of awful stillness and silence in which the shared fact of common mortality can interlock with, and be illuminated by, the fact of Christ's divinity and exaltation.

³ Julian of Norwich, *A Showing of Divine Love*, chapter 16 (all translations my own, based on what is usually called the Long Text).



Into this surreally extended moment, she introduces a meditation on Christ's nature that complicates the emotions of the scene by reminding us of that same unconditional love that Paul talks about in Philippians:

And thus I saw our Lord Jesus lingering for a long time. For the oneing of the godhead gave strength to the manhood, to suffer for love more than all men might suffer. . . . For he that was highest and worthiest was the most fully set at nought and the most utterly despised. . . . And in this he brought partly to mind the height and nobility of the glorious Godhead and also the preciousness and the

Soul-bow, draw, press down on the strings
Stretched out the length of the tree.
There have I been nailed.

I would never have believed, you my companions on this earth,
That its diverging paths would here, at this point, convene.
We were the upright witnesses, holding our heads high, straight
like rocks.
We were already on the peaks, and we thirsted for the summits,
for the steepened slopes
We could never move far enough upwards:
We had to open ourselves out,
Embrace this hard wood.

Love bursts open upright solitude;
Its hands stretch open, span like wings.
The crossing of the ways from earth to zenith, from west to east,
Thrills within these two trees, pulsing through their sap.

tenderness of the blissful body, which are united together, and also the reluctance that there is in our nature to suffer pain.⁴

The power of this moment, for me, comes from the way that Julian blends the human fear and inescapable lived experience of pain, suffering and death with the equally lived hope of the reward that awaits those who are set at nought and despised. Those who are set at nought will, in a mathematical paradox, be oned with God. Julian has really got inside Paul’s image of the self-emptying love of Christ: she has put flesh on its bones. She has earthed the abstractions of *kenosis* in the reality of death.

⁴ A *Showing of Divine Love*, chapter 20.

What amazes Julian most of all in reflecting on this harrowing scene is that the dreaded and longed for moment of release never in fact arrives:

And I looked after the departing one with all my strength and expected to have seen the body completely dead, but I saw him not so.

The feared outcome of the death watch never materialises in the form in which it is expected:

And right in the same time that, it seemed to me, by appearances, that the life might no longer last and the showing of the end necessarily had to happen, suddenly, while I was beholding the same cross, he changed his appearance. The changing of his appearance changed mine, and I was as glad and merry as it was possible to be. Then Our Lord brought merrily to my mind the words 'Where is now any point of your pain or your grief?'

Suddenly: by a brilliant sleight of hand, Julian has managed to blend together our two key images: the paradox of death on the Cross which leads to exaltation has been woven in to the claim that 'we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye'. Grief and joy become intense mirror images of each other. No longer through a glass darkly, we are changed because we now see Christ differently. We pass from the foot of the Cross to the Easter Garden:

We are now . . . sharing his cross with him in our pains and our passion, dying; and for us, who are willfully abiding in the same cross with his help and his grace up to the last point, suddenly he shall change his appearance to us, and we shall be with him in paradise. Between the one and the other there shall be no time, and then shall all be brought to joy.⁵

Not only is this a spectacular reading of Paul's teachings on death and exaltation; it also, in the phrase 'willful abiding', offers a way of describing that tough, hard-won blend of obedience and humility, which characterizes those who seek to have the mind of Christ within them. By her placing the changing of cheer at the end of a long and

⁵ *A Showing of Divine Love*, chapter 21.

tortuous struggle for life and for death, Julian's joy appears in the twinkling of an eye, and with a suddenness that surprises after the languors of the preceding descriptions: 'Where is now any point of your pain or your grief?'

Julian helps us to see how Paul's words reflect both the psychology of grief and bereavement, and the reality of human suffering and death. The nobility of a suffering that aspires to the hope of reward and exaltation is a kind of heroism in the face of change, a heroism driven by the hope of one final, irrevocable change. As Cardinal Newman said: 'to be human is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.' We are all changed and challenged by another's death, and we need clear maps and strong images to help us rediscover and navigate the tracks of our lives. After the shocked and frozen stillness of bereavement, the journey through change must begin again.

Can these thoughts provide any uplift, comfort, and general support? Do they enable us, like the speaker in *Lycidas*, to move on 'to fresh woods and pastures new'?

If only it were that easy . . .

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Tire, archet de mon âme, oh presse sur les cordes / Tendues le long de l'arbre!
On m'a cloué dessus. / Je n'aurais jamais cru, compagnons de la terre,
Qu'en ce point convergeaient ses routes dispersées.
Nous étions les témoins qui nous tenions debout, / Droits comme les rochers.
Nous cherchions sur ces pics / L'élan vers les sommets, la pente redressée.
Monter ne peut suffire, il faut s'ouvrir, / Etreindre ce bois dur.
L'amour fait éclater la solitude droite / Et l'emplit d'envergure jusqu'au bout de ses mains.
La croisée des chemins, de la terre au zénith, / De l'Ouest jusqu'à l'Orient
Vibre entre ces deux bois en plein cœur de la sève.

FROM DESPAIR TO COMMUNION

Discernment in the Writings of Luke

Patrick J. Howell

‘**W**E HAD HOPED . . .’ These are some of the saddest, most doleful words in all of Scripture. They occur as two disciples are walking along the road to Emmaus and encounter a stranger. They engage him in conversation, and he asks them why they are so sad. They are amazed that he seems to be the only one in the world who has not heard of the recent events in Jerusalem, about the judgment and crucifixion of Jesus. They voice their disillusionment:

We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. . . . Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. (Luke 24:21-23)

This narrative, told and re-told in the Lukan community at Antioch and the rest of Syria in the five decades following the death of Jesus, describes the continuing journey of the community of disciples. It also speaks to our own contemporary disillusionment with the promises which ‘we had hoped’ would be fulfilled in our own time.

Those of us who grew up in our faith during the Second Vatican Council believed that the Church was on the edge of a new era. ‘We had hoped’ not only that the energy, enthusiasm, renewal of faith released by the Council would ignite a new fire, but that we could sustain this dazzling light until it blazed to completion. ‘We had hoped.’

Others in the next generation, sated with their elders’ Vatican II-war stories of the dismantling of the ‘old Church’, grew weary from all the conflicts and upheaval. Where were the traditions, the beauty of ritual, the reassurance of faith and of the things hoped for? Their own service work during college—on the streets of Calcutta, in the

struggling schools of Belize, in prison ministry, in the advocacy for Mexican workers diseased from toxic substances in the US-owned factories exploiting cheap wage earners—all seemed like a distant dream. Where were the values now? Where was the centre? Where was the hope?

The Lukan scriptures (both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles) describe a road through this disillusionment. They recount stories of illumination and awakening, seeing and discerning and committed action. They offer hope in the midst of despair, but they do not provide an easy do-it-yourself kit for healing or for happiness. Rather, in the midst of the darkest hours, not only of the disciples but also of Jesus himself, they proclaim that God is faithful: the God Who led the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt into the Promised Land and Who raised Jesus from the dead will not abandon us. But nor will this faithful God simply rescue us from pain, misery, and suffering. The pathway to redemption runs *through* the human; it is not some quasi-angelic flight from human reality.

This article will draw out some patterns from Luke's Gospel and from the Acts of the Apostles that might help us, both in our local communities and as a wider Church, in our discernment and decision-making. It assumes that these two Lukan writings developed over a period of fifty years, and that they reflect the ongoing discernment of an early Greek-speaking Church that was nevertheless acquainted with Hebrew scriptural traditions.¹

We begin with four principles:

- that discernment occurs in the gathering of the community
- that facing into pain and naming one's disillusionment honestly can be transformational
- that truth-naming leadership is vital
- that tending to the body—concrete, mundane experiences of washing and eating and sleeping—and simple care for those in need enable us to enter into the Paschal mystery of our ongoing redemption. All are signs of how we too, like Christ and in Christ's power, are God become flesh.

¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), pp. 3, 9.

The Gathering

All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women and Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as with his brothers. (Acts 1:14)

The most distinguishing feature and the first condition for discernment is that there is a Gathering. The Greek word for The Gathering is *ekklesia*. It describes the calling forth and coming together of citizens or voters and it is also the root for our adjective *ecclesiastical*, which describes anything relating to Church. The early followers of Jesus were not called *Christians*—that came later—rather they were called *The Gathering*. They were an assembly, a calling forth of the citizen-voters of this new era. They were a ‘royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’ (1 Peter 2:9). Unlike the people of earlier times, they were all citizens of this ‘holy nation’; together they were called to listen deeply.

Luke recounts how, after the violent death of Jesus, the disciples gathered in the Upper Room or the Cenacle. He names the eleven disciples and adds, they were people of the promise, they were awaiting the fulfilment of God’s Word (See Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). In this expectant gathering Luke describes a tranquil scene—no longer in fearful hiding, as they had been before when ‘they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit’ (Luke 24:37). They are no longer fearful, scattered individuals; they have become a peaceful assembly (Acts 2:1-4). What has changed? What has shifted?

Certainly one major factor is that they are all gathered together in prayer. No one seems left out. All the disciples of Jesus and all his family are present. The previous tensions with the family of Jesus seem, at least for the time, to have dissipated. Surprisingly, especially in a patriarchal society, the evangelist specifically names Mary of Nazareth and the other women who had followed Jesus. Mary sits in their midst. In fact, much of Christian iconography and imagination pictures her in the very middle of the Eleven and all the other disciples, leading them in prayer. All look to her for guidance. She has become the model disciple and the mother of wisdom.

We need to ask why? Perhaps it is because she has already been here before. She has already intimately known fear at the invitation of God. She has sorrowed for the loss of a child. She has treasured the everlastingly new, creative workings of God. Thirty years before, she



El Greco, Pentecost

had welcomed the Spirit and enfleshed the Christ. Now she is expectant again, and in communion with each person here. Jesus, flesh of her flesh, has drawn them all here together as one Body.

There is also a caution that we need to add. Later mariology and Christian imagination tend to emphasize Mary to the exclusion of all the other women in the scene. This portrayal results in a focus on 'the mother and her sons' and can lead us to forget the importance of adult relationships between men and women. Such an emphasis on Mary to the exclusion of other women in ministry leadership roles cannot be found in either Acts or the Gospel of Luke.

How might we ourselves have the courage to join this Gathering? What draws us? Who helps us to gather? What fears, what anxieties, what cravings prevent us from freely joining this gathering of prayer?

Some examples of blockages might include: a lingering resentment towards someone because of a ruptured friendship; a fear that, if change occurs, we will lose our role or even our job; or a fear of deeper intimacy, whether with God or with each other, and of the commitment that will come with it. All these are real fears, and ones which the disciples experienced. They are the very ones that prevent sufficient spiritual freedom for discernment. By coming together in prayer, especially around the Eucharist, we already acknowledge our need for God's spirit to infuse our lives with healing and forgiveness.

Our first principle from Luke is that discernment is done in the Gathering, drawn together in expectant prayer.

Facing the Pain

'We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. . . ' (Luke 24:21)

'Friends . . . Judas became a guide for those who arrested Jesus.' (Acts 1:16)

In the resurrection narratives Jesus allows the disciples to bring their disillusionment to the surface, to name their loss, to acknowledge publicly their betrayal, and to express their sorrow. Through these processes, transformation can take place. The Stranger invites the disciples on the road to Emmaus to recount the tragic events of the past few days. With a simple, encouraging opening to the two downcast disciples, he says, 'What events?' Stricken with grief, they tell their story at length. Then the Stranger reframes the shocking death of Jesus by

recalling untold portions of the Jesus-story and by reinterpreting their pinched account. He illuminates it with the whole history of the promised covenant. But first, he invites and listens to the disciples telling their painful story as they walk along the road.

Redemption occurs by the journey through the human, not by some angelic escape from it. God embraced all that is human. Down through the centuries, the Gathering affirms this human journey. The Gathering at Vatican II, for instance, proclaimed:

The joys and hopes and sorrows and anxieties of people today, especially of those who are poor and afflicted, are also the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of the disciples of Christ, and there is nothing truly human which does not also affect them.²

Much unhappiness occurs because people avoid reality. It is too painful. Denial takes hold. People revert to old patterns of escapism or blame ('I was betrayed by God' or 'I was betrayed by my closest friend'), or revert to a false optimism or to angry self-flagellation. These stratagems dodge the painful truth. All the great world religions encourage believers to face and accept the pain of reality, rather than engage in futile, destructive escape. 'Life is suffering' was the first of the Four Noble Truths taught by Buddha. Once we see and accept this truth, we are truly free. Pain and suffering ease because they no longer have a grip on us.

Organizations or institutions are notorious for avoiding reality. For many US Americans the Vietnam War or the atrocities of the CIA in Latin America were an awakening to the multitude of ways that a government can delude itself and its people. Nor is the Church free of such delusions. Multiple voices lay, religious, priests and bishops have called for a new openness in the Church and for a greater frankness in our speech.

At the European Synod of Bishops (1999), Cardinal Martini, the former archbishop of Milan, urged the Church to face its present reality. In his synod speech he described three dreams he had for the future of the Church.³ One of them was for a universal council of the bishops to

² *Gaudium et spes*, n. 1, translation from *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, volume 2, *Trent to Vatican II*, edited by Norman P. Tanner, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), p. 1069.

³ *The Tablet* (30 October 1999) pp. 1489-1490. The author was present at an informal conference in Rome where Cardinal Martini expanded on his brief eight-minute intervention at the Synod.

treat the intractable, clearly identifiable issues in the Church. Every pastor, the Cardinal explained, knows what they are and deals with them daily.

Our own listing of these knotty problems include: 1) an emphasis on priestly celibacy to the exclusion of providing eucharistic and sacramental needs;⁴ 2) issues around sacramental marriage and the remarriage of divorced Catholics which cause pervasive pain; 3) even more acute in these last few years, the sexual abuse of minors by clergy and an episcopal culture which has led to secrecy, cover-up and further abuse in several dioceses.

The church as a whole needs to gather together, Martini recommended, and deal with these neuralgic issues frankly, honestly, prayerfully. They need to listen to experts both lay and clerical, and then make a decision. It is not that difficult, and there is ample precedent for it, he said. After all, the first council of the Church, the Council of Jerusalem in 49 AD, dealt with only one issue, namely how the Gentiles were to be received into the Church. From our own reading of the Acts of the Apostles we know that at that council pastors in the field, like Paul and Barnabas, confronted the church leadership in Jerusalem, who then changed or modified their position. Then together they all dealt with the new reality in the Church.

**Do not burden
God's people** The direction is clear: do not burden the people with a yoke that neither they nor their ancestors were able to bear (Acts 15:10). Trust that the people have heard the good news and become believers, and therefore follow the law of love inscribed in their hearts and lives. The Spirit blows where it wills and cannot be contained. At the same time certain basic observances—not to eat meat sacrificed to idols and to refrain from unlawful marriage—are imposed in order to avoid scandal and further dissension (Acts 15:28).

Facing reality calls forth courage and wisdom, which are already the gifts of the Spirit. Nothing we face today is any more urgent or the solutions called for any more radical than was the issue of dispensing the Gentiles from the Deuteronomic code in the first century.

Almost all of us—church leaders included—attempt to avoid these painful realities. This basic human tendency to avoid reality, and the

⁴ Francis Dorff, 'Are We Killing Our Priests?', *America*, 182 (29 April 2000), pp. 7-9. Bishop Kenneth Untener is here quoted as saying that the shortage of priests is 'real and getting worse . . . the biggest problem I face as a bishop'. According to Dorff, 'we encourage and reward our priests for workaholism'.

suffering inherent in it, is the cause of much human illness, and is fertile ground for destructive, demonic forces in the Church. On the personal level, the avoidance of conflict over a misunderstanding can lead to festering resentments. On the Church level, we currently have an abundance of examples. If the US bishops had addressed the issue of sexual abuse of minors by clergy when they heard the first comprehensive reports of it in 1985, the ongoing abuse might have been severely curbed, and the Church might have been spared tremendous scandal. In this instance, the abuse of authority is perhaps even greater. Yet another example of an assault on truth is the silencing of cardinals, bishops, sisters, priests and theologians who have threatened the Vatican power structure.⁵

So our second principle is that the complete telling of our stories, however painful, will open the door to healing and reconciliation.

Transforming Leadership

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred and twenty persons) and said, 'Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.'
(Acts 1:15-17)

One of the most excruciating realities that the Gathering had to face was the fact that one of their own had betrayed Jesus, and that most of them had scattered at the arrest of Jesus for fear of their lives. Peter must have been painfully aware of his own betrayal of his beloved friend, more than anyone else in the group. Yet he is the first to stand up and to take responsibility. He is the first to publicly name this unbearable reality.

Similarly, John Paul II on the First Sunday of Lent, 2000, begged for forgiveness and humbly asked for reconciliation from many of the people that the Church had harmed through the ages—Jews, women, indigenous peoples, people of other faiths. In making this Jubilee Year act of humility, and in thus requesting forgiveness, John Paul II reportedly had to break through the resistance of many curial officials

⁵ See Garry Wills, *Papal Sin: the Structures of Deceit* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

who thought it was ‘inopportune’ or would ‘send the wrong message’ or would ‘put the Church in a bad light’.

A transforming leader faces the reality of sin.⁶ In one of his novels, Wendell Berry refers to ‘young preachers’ who,

. . . were bright and could speak—I mean they could sound as if they were awake and troubled enough in their own hearts to have something to say.⁷

Peter was such a transforming leader, not because he himself had such great leadership skills or innate charismatic power, but rather because he had been transformed. The power of the resurrection encounter, the radical forgiveness of his betrayal, and the descent of the Spirit transformed Peter from a fearful, though loving person into a courageous proclaimer of Christ’s saving power. Transforming leaders are most often those who have undergone transformation themselves.

A transforming leader enables people to stay in their pain and to grapple with it, rather than to give way to the easy temptations to escape, to run, and to hide. Transforming leaders—perhaps through their skill, but most likely through their unshakable trust in people—help the Gathering to stay focused, to stay with the story in all its richness, human frailty, and murky potential. A transforming leader helps the community realise the dead end of easy escapes, of infantile blaming, or of easy denial.

Transforming leaders may not be immediately obvious. Witness Mary. The disciples gather round her in prayer. Her quiet wisdom penetrates the room. She quietly assists in transforming their anxieties into prayer. All the wisdom of the past years now courses through her; all her pain and sorrow, her own moments of disillusionment, her own honest acceptance of her life in God become a source for this Gathering. Some of her experience, crystallized in a word or phrase, reverberates down through the centuries: ‘She was greatly troubled at the saying’ (Luke 1:29). And in another passage, ‘Son, why have you

⁶ James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 4. Burns identifies two basic types of leadership: the *transactional* and the *transforming*. The relations of most leaders and followers are *transactional*—leaders approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another, for example jobs for votes. *Transforming* leadership, while more complex, is more powerful. The transforming leader recognises and builds on an existing need of a follower, but seeks to evoke higher motives as well as to engage the full person of the follower.

⁷ Wendell Berry, *Jayber Crow* (Counterpoint Press, 2000) p. 162.

treated us so? Your father and I have been looking for you anxiously.' 'And his mother kept all these things in her heart' (Luke 2:48, 51). 'My soul magnifies the Lord' (Luke 1:46). Maternity, compassion, liberating power, intimate presence, and re-creative energy dwell in her heart.⁸ These are transformative energies—although in our secular culture or even in the hierarchical Church, this type of leadership is not given much credence.

I have focused on the transformative leadership that Mary offers. Similar claims can be made for the Samaritan woman at the well and for Mary of Magdala. In fact, the issue of leadership warrants a whole separate article.⁹ In it we would also want to develop the voices and contributions of the disabled, of gays and lesbians, of the marginalised, and of the elderly as sources for transformation. But here, in an article on discernment, let us simply name our third principle.

A discerning leader trusts the Spirit working through every dimension of the human.

Tending the Body

The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb, and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. (Luke 23:55-56)

Some details in Scripture, such as this one, seem rather peripheral. Why so much attention to spices and ointments and their preparation? Why so much fuss over a body that is dead, mangled, and pierced? As a resurrection people, shouldn't we put the Cross behind us? Shouldn't we, after all, be looking forward towards living in the Spirit, rather than getting bogged down in the mundane tasks of washing and anointing and burying the body? Of course, it needs to be done, but does it merit attention of sacred scripture? Didn't this new Way, this new life in Christ, supersede all the Sabbath observance and the Old Law? If indeed these Lukan texts were first written as late as the 80s AD, why is

⁸ See Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'Mary and the Female Face of God', *Theological Studies*, 50 (September, 1989), pp. 500-526.

⁹ In addition to James McGregor Burns, readers may wish to consult Peter F. Drucker, *The Effective Executive* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1993 [1966]); and Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1994).

there still an emphasis on Sabbath observance after all that has happened?

***The road to
the Spirit is
through the
human***

As we raise these questions, we can see that these three little sentences reveal layers and layers of wisdom. They provide an icon for the importance of staying grounded, for attending to the body, for 'looking at the birds of the air and the lilies of the field', for reverencing all the creation around us, caring for it, absorbing from it. Once again we realise that 'our expectations are not God's'. Or in a rather ironic twist, 'the human way is God's way'. The road to Spirit is through the human, through the daily fidelity to visiting the sick, anointing the dying, feeding the hungry, washing little faces, sweeping the floors, washing and anointing the dead. Tending to the body reveals an action most divine, for God's manner is ordinary. 'By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God' (1 John 4:2).

Tending to the body does not mean pampering whims. Some discipline and curbing of appetites remain vital for a spirit of openness. The bracketing of our own inordinate cravings enable us to attend to deeper, more genuine desires arising from our depths through the action of the Spirit. By developing the ascetical skill of listening to the heart of another, we discover the multiple and wondrous ways in which the Spirit is also acting in our midst.¹⁰

A couple of humorous incidents related to papal elections illustrate this point about attending to the body and to mundane human needs. Through the centuries, conclaves of cardinals to elect a new pope have become deadlocked because of competing factions or rival families offering their own favourite son. At one such conclave in Orvieto, Italy, the electors were deadlocked for weeks. The increasingly impatient multitude removed the rooftop of the meeting hall so that the lordly cardinals would bake in the summer sun. Exposed to a new reality, they quickly elected a new pope. In another tediously long conclave held in Rome, the faithful simply cut the food supply in half. Minds were focused, and a decisive election promptly made. No one would say that

¹⁰ We should not assume a dichotomy between 'my desires' and 'God's desires'. In fact, just the opposite is the case. Most spiritual writers consider our own deepest desires as God-given and congruent with God's will. However, the possibilities for deception, of ego-centered selfishness masked as virtue, are legion. So our own deepest gifts and experiences may need the gentle corrective of an astute spiritual director or the guidance arising from communal discernment.

these processes were ideal examples of discernment, but—by exaggeration—they are making one important point: good discernment will always take into account the messages sent by our bodies.

A fourth principle of discernment is that attending to the body grounds us in our own human reality wherein God dwells.

The Truth of the Spirit

These four principles operate as conditions for discernment. They invite us to await the power of God. They prepare us, dispose us for God's gracious initiative. And so we pray:

Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the Earth,
Renew in us the fire of your divine love.

What are the fruits of this coming of the Spirit? We will name here just two: *understanding each other's languages* and a *capacity to re-frame or re-imagine* the current pastoral reality.

Understanding Each Other's Languages

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (Acts 2:1-4)

All begin to speak and understand each other's language. Undoubtedly this event reflects the traditional understanding of the gift of tongues, but for our reflection it points to a deeper reality as well. All present understood each other—no matter which language was spoken. There was a communion and presence to each other that transcended all boundaries, lowered all barriers, and which appreciated the diversity and accents and customs of all present—whether from Jerusalem or Mesopotamia or Cappadocia or even from Rome.

Many faith communities experience such joy after a long struggle and after facing the darkness of their own journey together. The breakthrough may involve some members acknowledging their own fears or apologizing for their rash decisions or seeking reconciliation with each other. Resentment, anger at perceived snubs, or even justified

anger at betrayal—all surge upward for the healing touch of God. And our passionate God reaches out a wounded hand, and sends solace and balm and peace.

The gifts of the Spirit are clearly manifest in this Pentecostal scene that Luke describes. The disciples have moved from Gathering to Touching the Pain to Openness to the Spirit. They reach an understanding beyond all their grievances, beyond language barriers. In the process they reinterpret their entire reality in the light of this blazing transformational event. Now they act. And they act without hesitation. They act with wisdom and courage.

The Spirit engenders a profound presence to each other. It births the Christ made flesh and dispels differences, as well as leading us to a deeper appreciation of every individual's unique gifts within the Gathering.

Reinterpreting our Reality in the Light of the Scriptures

*Peter, standing with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed them. . . .
'David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,*

*The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.*

Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.'
(Acts 2:14, 34-36)

Peter reinterprets the Old Testament texts by applying them to Jesus the crucified one. It is a new time. The resurrection event casts all the Scriptures in a new light. Peter engages in what all good pastors do every Sunday. He interprets the scriptures, which illuminate the congregation's new experiences. Such preaching sheds light in two directions—the Scriptures illuminate our own experience and, in turn, our own experience reinterprets the Scriptures.

The biblical theologian Walter Brueggemann describes this dynamic interplay of a faith community embracing the living word as movements of obedience and interpretation. Brueggemann says, 'Interpretation that seeks to let the old word be the living word must be an act of obedience'.¹¹ *Obedient interpretation* discovers how the Bible authorises,

¹¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation and Obedience: From Faithful Reading to Faithful Living* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 1.

evokes, and enables a world that is an alternative to the deathly world of our dominant value system. Likewise *interpretive obedience* imagines how the nonnegotiable intentions of God are to be discerned and practised in our situation. The entire process involves an obediential listening to Scripture, a diligent grasp of the pastoral situation, and a re-imagining of pastoral opportunities.

To illustrate, Brueggemann identifies the Ten Commandments as both the deep base of Israel's covenantal existence and also as the warrant for liberated reflection. He recalls for us that Israel insists that no one shall add to or subtract from this simple terse code (Deut. 4:2). Having voiced this prohibition, Israel proceeds to add reams of additional commentary and speeches and sermons to the commands. This expansion of the Ten Commandments was an odd but faithful way in Israel of 'adding nothing'. The commandments, Brueggemann wryly observes, 'are utterly nonnegotiable', but 'they are also endlessly negotiated'.¹² This reinterpretation is the act of imagination. Israel has no alternative but to probe the memory, and to trust the future of the memory that pushes beyond itself. Only through imagination and continual interpretation can we as a community be faithful to the Scriptures.

**God's Word
is nonnegotiable
yet constantly
renegotiated**

Through the Spirit, the Gathering re-imagines and reinterprets its present reality in the light of God's faithful action in the past.

In this article we have drawn four principles for discernment from the Lukan Scriptures. Then we described two consequences arising from a discernment faithful to the memory of Jesus and open to the future promised by the Spirit.

God may surprise us. Without warning, our hearts become afire with God's very presence, which deeply connects us all. Transformed, we speak each other's language. We live out of the abundance of God's gifts, rather than out of our own fears and anxieties. We move into a deeper understanding of each other, even a wordless intimacy. Such motions can best be described as a surrender to God's initiative, rather than anything that the faith community *does* for itself.

¹² Brueggemann, *Interpretation and Obedience*, p. 3.

The Gathering understands itself and its relationship with God in a whole new light. Through an obediential listening to scripture and its own pastoral situation, it re-imagines the current plight. It envisions opportunities. It draws unexpected energy from the intersection of tradition with its own deeply felt experience. All this may sound complex, but it flows simply and naturally out of prayer, contemplation, and commitment to the Gathering.

In conclusion, we can say that discernment has no formulas. It is a lifetime process of obediential listening to the Scriptures proclaimed in the Gathering, and of attending to God's Spirit recreating the world in our personal and communal depths.

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JESUS AND BUDDHISTS

Elizabeth J. Harris

MOST WRITING ON INTER-FAITH TOPICS in Christian circles concentrates on how Christians come to terms with ‘other religions’. This essay is going to be different: it will explore some Buddhist accounts of Jesus. To do this, I shall use a set of categories—exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism—that some Christian writers on inter-faith relations consider inadequate.¹ But if they are detached from the Christian theological concept of ‘salvation’ they can be seen to indicate, in a way that remains quite valid, three general tendencies present within us all when we view the ‘other’:

- the tendency to draw nonnegotiable distinctions based on difference
- the tendency to embrace the ‘other’ within one’s own conceptual framework, playing down difference
- the tendency simply to co-exist with difference.

If interpreted in this way, the categories can be a helpful analytical tool, particularly if one adds a fourth tendency:

- the attitude of mind that recognises difference not as the ground for adopting a nonnegotiable position, but as an opportunity for enrichment and challenge, even for self-interrogation.

An earlier version of this article was published in Sri Lanka as ‘Avatara, Bodhisattva or Prophet: Seeing Jesus through the Eyes of Other Faiths’, *Dialogue*, New Series, 27 (2001), pp. 106-129.

¹ This typology was first used in Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religion*, (London: SCM, 1983) to describe three attitudes towards the salvific potential of other faiths. It has been criticized because of its dependence on the concept of salvation, a predominantly Christian concept.

Here are examples of the kinds of view I have in mind:

- ‘There is so much that is different between Jesus and our own holy teachers that I cannot see him fitting into our structures at all although he was a good man’—an *exclusivist* tendency;
- There are so many similarities between the teachings of Jesus and our own beliefs that Jesus must either have had some contact with our beliefs or simply be one of our own spiritual teachers’—an *inclusivist* tendency;
- ‘Since all religions teach the same basic message in spite of differences, Jesus can stand as an equal alongside all great spiritual teachers’—a *pluralist* tendency.

I will not concentrate on the last, the pluralist tendency. There is a simple reason for this: I have not discovered many Buddhists who have voiced it. The closest I have found comes from nineteenth-century Sri Lanka in the words of a member of the Buddhist monastic Sangha to Rev James Selkirk, a Baptist missionary, in June 1827:

. . . that English people worshipped Jesus Christ, and that Sinhalese people worshipped the Budha, that they were both good religions, and would both take those that professed them to heaven at last.²

Drawing Nonnegotiable Distinctions: The Exclusivist Tendency

Exclusivist theology tends to legitimate polemics, and Buddhist representations of Jesus have indeed sometimes been polemical. In order to score points against Christianity, Buddhists have presented Jesus as a womaniser, a delinquent, a fomenter of discord, a user of alcohol, an abuser of his mother, and a false messiah.³ Such views contribute little to courteous inter-faith encounter. Far more

² James Selkirk, *Recollections of Ceylon after a Residence of Nearly Thirteen Years with an Account of The Church Missionary Society's Operations in the Island and Extracts from a Journal* (London: Hatchard, 1844), p. 379. For a more detailed exploration of the issues here, see: Elizabeth J. Harris, ‘Double Belonging in Sri Lanka: Illusion or Liberating Path?’ in *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), edited by Catherine Cornille, pp. 76-92.

³ See for example: Dr V. A. Gunasekera, *The Buddhist-Christian Dialogue on Women and Feminism: a Refutation of a Christian Critique of the Buddha's Position on the Question of Women, together with an Examination of the Views of Jesus on the Same Subject*, The Buddhist Society of Queensland Tracts on Buddhism, No. 12 (Toowong: Buddhist Society of Queensland, 1994).

significant for our purposes are the views of Buddhist practitioners who are not interested in scoring points, but have nevertheless reached a stage where nonnegotiable distinctions are inescapable, because of their difficulties with how Jesus is presented in the gospels or in Christian tradition. Two problems occur again and again for such Buddhists: Jesus and anger, and Jesus as saviour.

Jesus and Anger

Within several conversations I have had with Buddhists, Asian and Western, the incident of Jesus turning over the tables in the temple has arisen. One western Buddhist nun once told me that this was the one incident in the Christian gospels that persuaded her that Jesus was not an enlightened being. She simply could not fit Jesus' reaction into her idea of what one who is free from mental defilements would do.⁴ The reason for this is that, within Buddhism, anger is always a negative quality. It is a symptom of greed or hatred, both of which have to be rooted out if enlightenment is to arise. Her reaction, therefore, was normative, not exceptional, as this further example from a Japanese Buddhist, Soho Machida, suggests:

Jesus may have acted in the name of righteousness; but from the standpoint of common sense, his violent act does not sound like that of a sacred being. In the eyes of the merchants and shoppers whom Jesus interrupted, he must have appeared more like a demon.⁵

Buddhists do not believe that humans should be silent in the face of injustice. It is a question of the method of approach. Effective, discerning, wise action, they would argue, cannot arise if anger is present. For anger is part of the unenlightened mind. As such it should be recognised rather than repressed; ultimately, however, it should be transformed into an activist compassion, rooted in wisdom. There is no place in Buddhism, therefore, for a righteous anger that expresses itself by turning over the tables of those involved in temple trade. 'Why

⁴ Defilements (*kilesa* in Pali) are mind-defiling qualities that have to be rooted out if enlightenment is to be attained. In the Theravada tradition, there are ten: greed, hatred, delusion, conceit, speculative views, sceptical doubt, mental torpor, restlessness, shamelessness, lack of moral dread.

⁵ Soho Machida, 'Jesus, Man of Sin: Toward a New Christology', in *Buddhists Talk about Jesus: Christians Talk about the Buddha*, edited by Rita M. Gross and Terry C. Muck (New York and London: Continuum, 2000), pp. 59-73, here p. 68.

couldn't Jesus have used the art of persuasion and reasoned argument?' a Buddhist might ask. 'Surely that might have changed minds more effectively than action which could only provoke anger in return!'

Jesus as Saviour

More problematic for some Buddhists, however, are the twin emphases on Jesus as God and Jesus as Saviour, as 'other power'. The difficulties are compounded when 'final' and 'only' qualify the latter. Buddhism is non-theistic. Although Buddhists attribute to the Buddha some of the qualities that Christians attribute to God, and although deities occur within Buddhist cosmology, the Buddha is not a God and Buddhists do not look to a creator or sustainer of the universe. The enlightenment of the historical Buddha, *Siddhartha Gotama* (Sanskrit: *Gautama*), elevated him to a state far above the human in the eyes of most Buddhists; but most revere him as one who shows the way rather than as a saviour. The idea of one's 'own power' is therefore most important to Buddhists, as this verse from the *Dhammapada*, one of the best-loved holy texts within Buddhism, indicates:

By oneself is evil done, by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone, by oneself is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself—no one can purify another.⁶

Self-sacrifice for the good of others has a hallowed place in Buddhist narrative tradition. For example, Theravada Buddhists believe that every era of time produces one Buddha, and that each of these prepared for Buddhahood through mastering ten 'perfections' (Pali: *paramita*) in numerous rebirths. One of the perfections is *dana parami*—the perfection of giving, which involves a willingness to give one's life for the good of other beings.⁷ However, the idea that the death of one individual can act as the direct cause of the salvation of others is implausible, even a little ludicrous, to many Buddhists. A useful insight into the strength of this barrier is a compilation of articles already cited that has been published by Continuum:

⁶ Verse 165, translation taken from Acharya Buddhārakkhita, *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1985).

⁷ Within the Theravada Canon, in the *Khuddaka Nikaya* of the *Sutta Pitaka* is a book called the *Jataka*. This gives 547 stories of the former lives of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gotama. A number of these show the Buddha-to-be sacrificing himself for the good of others.

Buddhists Talk About Jesus: Christians Talk About the Buddha. Generally speaking, the Christians who talk about the Buddha have less difficulty than the Buddhists who talk about Jesus. The first Buddhist writer, for instance, José Ignacio Cabezón, appeals to the Buddhist perspective on 'own power', claiming that 'no being has the capacity to decide whether or not we will be saved', and that liberation is gained through a 'long and arduous process of radical mental transformation'. He finishes:

Together these various tenets make it impossible for Buddhists to accept a messianic creed of the traditional Christian sort. Jesus may have been an extraordinary human being, a sage, an effective and charismatic teacher, and even the manifestation of a deity, but he cannot have been the messiah that most Christians believe him to have been.⁸

Rita Gross, in the same collection, is well aware, as an academic in dialogue with Christian academics, of the different faces of Jesus in scholarly discourse: the Jesus of the gospels, the historical Jesus, the Jesus of the early church, the Jesus as understood through doctrines such as the Trinity. She chooses to engage with Jesus the only saviour, because it is the most widely accepted face within the Christian communities she knows. She comes up with statements such as:

Exclusivist claims in religion, I would argue, are among the most dangerous, destructive, and immoral ideas that humans have ever created.

And later:

I object to the Jesus of popular religion as interpreted by major strands of Christianity not because this interpretation is unedifying or crude, but because this very widespread and prevalent interpretation is *dangerous, destructive, and degraded*.⁹

Gross finds these versions of Christian faith objectionable because they condemn religious people who are outside Christianity; they refuse to recognise that people of other faiths might have spiritual gifts; and they

⁸ 'A God but not a Saviour', in *Buddhists Talk About Jesus: Christians Talk About the Buddha*, pp. 17-31, here p. 28.

⁹ 'Meditating on Jesus', in *Buddhists Talk About Jesus: Christians Talk About the Buddha*, pp. 32-51, here pp. 34, 36.

speak with a vocabulary of judgment and excommunication, a language, which, if not shrugged off with laughter by the 'other', can be deeply offensive and damaging.

At the end of the collection of articles, Grace Burford, a western Buddhist, is given the task of responding to the Christian articles on the Buddha. She finds herself mystified by how the Christian writers seem profoundly attracted to the Buddha and yet remain Christian. Eventually she suggests that, whereas Buddhism is a religion of 'own power', it is belief in 'other power' that binds the Christian writers to their faith, and that this constitutes an unbridgeable difference between the two religions. She ends in this way:

I appreciate help, and know that nothing I do is truly independent (see the Buddhist explanation of dependent co-arising). I might want cosmic grace, even. But I don't conceive of that grace as coming from a personal God who saved all humanity by incarnating in Jesus, or as being required by some innate deficiency in myself that has to be fixed by someone else. For me, grace lies in the interdependency of things and that is enough. So give me a map, lend me your car (or raft?), show me a shortcut, even protect me along the way if you can—but do not make the trip for me!¹⁰

The advantage of the approach adopted by Cabezón, Gross and Burford is that it takes the witness of the majority of Christians to Jesus seriously. It does not attempt to submerge it or to alter it by appeal to Buddhist categories. It does not attempt a reinterpretation. Difference is taken seriously, and in some cases the only conclusion the writers can reach is that there are points of nonnegotiable difference between the two religions in their attitude to their respective 'founders'. The result is that a mirror is held up to Christians, however unflattering the image. The disadvantages are that the diversity of views within both the Buddhist and Christian communities can be overlooked, as well as the very real touching points between Buddhism and Christianity.

The Inclusivist Tendency

It is the inclusivist tendency that I have found most frequently when exploring how Buddhists respond to Jesus. According to the definition I

¹⁰ Grace Burford, 'If The Buddha Is So Great, Why Are These People Christian?' in *Buddhists Talk About Jesus: Christians Talk About The Buddha*, pp. 131-137, here p. 137.

have outlined, it is an approach that draws Jesus into the thought forms of the faith of the perceiver, sometimes with scant regard for how most Christians understand themselves.

At one end of a spectrum of inclusivist Buddhist perspectives is the claim that Jesus learnt from Buddhists in the so-called hidden years, and incorporated much that was Buddhist into his teaching as a result. For instance, Holger Kersten and Elmar R. Gruber, in *The Original Jesus: The Buddhist Sources of Christianity*,¹¹ argue that the strength of the parallels between the life and teaching of Jesus and those of the Buddha are so great that Jesus must have been taught by Buddhist missionaries to the Bible Lands. The truth of this is masked, they suggest, because references in the gospels to Indian beliefs such as reincarnation were suppressed by Christian exegetes and translators. The story of Nicodemus is quoted as one example. 'Except a man be born again and again' is how they would render Jesus' reply to Nicodemus. They place particular stress on two Buddhist texts, the *Dhammapada* and the *Udana*, canonical texts in the Theravada Buddhist tradition predating Christianity; and they claim 'the instructions of Jesus' were based on them, particularly the teaching within Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount.

At one point, a direct parallel is made between Matthew 15:17-20 (Authorised Version) and passages from these two texts:

Man does not purify himself by washing as most people do in this world. Anyone who rejects any sin, large and small, is a holy man because he rejects sins.
(*Udana* 33:13)

Evil is done through the self; man defiles himself through the self. Evil is made good through the self; man purifies himself through the self.
(*Dhammapada* 12:9)

Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught. But those things which proceed out of the mouth came forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.
(Matthew 15:17-20)

Similarly, Kersten and Gruber isolate Jesus' walking on water, and the miracle of the loaves and the fishes as stories taken over from Buddhist precedents, seeing significance in the fact that they follow one another in the gospels:

¹¹ (Shaftesbury, Rockport and Brisbane: Element Books, 1996). What follows draws on pp. 90-98.

The miracle of the loaves and fishes (Matthew 14:15-21, Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:13-17) obviously derives from the introduction to *Jataka* 78. There it is reported that with the bread in his alms bowl the Buddha satisfied the hunger of 500 disciples and all the inhabitants of a monastery, and much bread remained.

The central section of the book is simply called 'Jesus—the Buddhist'.

There is not time to explore in detail the argument put forward by Kersten and Gruber. They were not the first to suggest that the remarkable parallels between the lives and teachings of Jesus and the Buddha must be due to the influence of Buddhism, and they will not be the last. The book stands at the far end of the inclusivist tendency to appropriate the 'other'. I am not sure whether Gruber and Kersten are practising Buddhists, but their writings are certainly influential among Buddhists. I have had *The Original Jesus* quoted to me favourably by Buddhist friends, with the implication that there should be nothing to prevent Christians and Buddhists being allies—after all, Jesus taught Buddhist truths.

At the other end of the spectrum are contemporary Buddhists who have come into contact with Jesus through dialogue with Christians in the present, such as Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama and the Sri Lankan monk and artist, The Venerable Hatigammana Uttarananda. Both an inclusivist tendency and a constructive approach to difference, my fourth category, can be seen in them.

***The actions
and words of
Jesus embody
'mindfulness'***

Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk and a Zen master, now in exile in France. He began a journey into Christianity and the gospels in the context of inter-monastic encounter and social action, through friendship with Christians such as Thomas Merton and Martin Luther King. When he assesses the person of Jesus, it is evident from his writings that he draws on both these interests, as well as on his rootedness in Buddhist meditation. What leaps out at him from the gospels as a result is that the actions and words of Jesus embody 'mindfulness'. The concept of mindfulness—*sati* in Pali—is central to Buddhism. It is a form of meditation that is intended to spill over into everyday life. At its simplest, it is the practice of constant awareness of the present moment. The *Satipatthana Sutta* of the Theravada Canon isolates four 'foundations' for such practice: mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of the emotions or feelings, mindfulness of the mind or consciousness, and mindfulness of what is translated as 'mind objects', for example a

subjective desire for sensual pleasure.¹² The aim of such practice is to develop a state of clear, unbiased awareness that can lead to effective action in the world, free from reactions conditioned by greed, hatred and delusion. Seeing Jesus in this way, he writes:

To me, mindfulness is very much like the Holy Spirit. Both are agents of healing. When you have mindfulness, you have love and understanding, you see more deeply, and you can heal the wounds in your own mind. The Buddha was called the King of Healers. In the Bible, when someone touches Christ, he or she is healed. It is not just touching a cloth that brings about a miracle. When you touch deep understanding and love, you are healed.¹³

Thich Nhat Hanh has written two books on Jesus: *Living Buddha, Living Christ* and *Going Home: Jesus and the Buddha are Brothers*. In both he stresses action, path, and experience when comparing the two figures, not belief or dogma. More important for him than faith in Jesus is putting Jesus' teachings into practice, embodying them. In keeping with the non-theistic nature of Buddhism, he avoids speaking of God as objective reality. He is quite ready, however, to equate compassion in action, which he would see as lying at the heart of Buddhism, with the Holy Spirit of Christian thought, and even with what Christians would call God. Whether it springs from Buddhism or Christianity, the most important need in his eyes is that mindfulness and compassion should be released into the world. With this understanding, he is able to write:

Before I met Christianity, my only spiritual ancestor was the Buddha. But when I met beautiful men and women who are Christians, I came to know Jesus as a great teacher. Since that day Jesus Christ has become one of my spiritual ancestors. As I have mentioned, on the altar of my hermitage in France, I have statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and also an image of Jesus Christ. I do not feel any conflict within me. Instead I feel stronger because I have more than one root.¹⁴

¹²The *Satipatthana Sutta* is found in the *Majjhima Nikaya* of the *Sutta Pitaka* of the Theravada Canon. See 'Discourse on the Applications of Mindfulness' in *The Collection of Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima Nikaya)*, Vol. I (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1993), pp. 70-82.

¹³ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (London, Sydney, Auckland and Johannesburg: Rider, 1995), pp. 14-15. See also *Going Home: Jesus and the Buddha are Brothers* (London: Rider, 1999).

¹⁴ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, pp. 99-100. The quotations which follow are to be found on pp. 185, 65, 55-56, 154.

When he looks later at parts of the gospels that have been interpreted in exclusivist ways, he does not take at face value the exclusivist Christian approach to them but draws on Buddhist categories to re-interpret and re-invent, as in the examples below:

It is necessary to die in order to be reborn. As soon as you experience impermanence, non-self and interbeing,¹⁵ you are born again . . . Jesus said that unless you are reborn as a child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

He then comments on what Jesus says in John 15:

'I am the true vine. . . . Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.' This is close to Buddhism. Without mindfulness, we cannot bear the fruit of love, understanding, and liberation. We must bring forth the Buddha in ourselves. We have to evoke the living Buddha in ourselves in order to become more understanding and more loving.

And of John 14:6:

When Jesus said, 'I am the Way,' He meant that to have a true relationship with God, you must practise His way. In the Acts of the Apostles, the early Christians always spoke of their faith as 'the Way'. To me, 'I am the way' is a better statement than 'I know the way.' The way is not an asphalt road. But we must distinguish between the 'I' spoken by Jesus and the 'I' that people usually think of. The 'I' in His statement is *life* itself, His life, which is the way. If you do not really look at His life, you cannot see the way. If you only satisfy yourself with practising a name, even the *name* of Jesus, it is not practising the life of Jesus. We must practise living deeply, loving, and acting with charity if we wish truly to honour Jesus. The way is Jesus Himself and not just some idea of Him.

It is not surprising, therefore, that he feels able to write:

I do not think there is much difference between Christians and Buddhists. Most of the boundaries we have created between our

¹⁵ This term is a coinage of Thich Nhat Hanh's, and means something close to 'interconnectedness'.

two traditions are artificial. Truth has no boundaries. Our differences may be mostly differences in emphasis.

To my knowledge, His Holiness the Dalai Lama was not in contact with social activists such as Martin Luther King. In recent years, however, Christians involved in meditation, in non-violent action, and in inter-faith dialogue have drawn him into conversation. In 1994, for instance, he was asked to participate in the John Main Seminar, an annual event organized by the World Community for Christian Meditation in honour of its founder. In advance, he was given eight passages from the New Testament, which included the Beatitudes, and accounts of the Transfiguration and the Resurrection. Each session began with silent meditation, something the Christian participants were familiar with. Then the Dalai Lama read one of the Bible passages and commented on it with the aid of an interpreter. Questions followed. The account of the seminar, published in 1996, shows the Dalai Lama commenting freely on the resonances he has discovered between Christianity and his own tradition. Rarely does he conflate the two. Yet, when asked specifically about the person of Jesus, his instinctive response was to draw Jesus into Buddhist categories:

For a Buddhist, whose main object of refuge is the Buddha, when coming into contact with someone like Jesus Christ—whose life clearly demonstrates a being who has affected millions of people in a spiritual way, bringing about their liberation and freedom from suffering—the feeling that one would have toward such a person would be that of reverence toward a fully enlightened being or *bodhisattva*.¹⁶

Apart from saying that Jesus was a Buddha, this is the highest tribute that he could have given to Jesus, from within his own tradition. A *bodhisattva*, in the Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist tradition, is a being who has gained enlightenment through mastering six moral perfections: giving, morality, patience, effort, meditative concentration and wisdom. Through this, he or she has become the epitome of wisdom and compassion. *Bodhisattvas* also make a vow that they will help others

¹⁶ *The Good Heart: His Holiness the Dalai Lama Explores the Heart of Christianity—and of Humanity*, edited by Robert Kiely (London, Sydney, Auckland and Johannesburg: Rider, 1996), pp. 82-83.

towards liberation and not pass beyond the round of suffering and rebirth until all beings have gained enlightenment.

A further interesting passage from the record of this seminar comes when the Dalai Lama comments on John 12:44-50: 'I have come into the world as light, so that no one who has faith in me should remain in darkness'. It is significant that he ignores the question of 'other power' and brings Buddhist categories to bear:

The Tibetan word for faith is *day-pa*, which perhaps might be closer in meaning to confidence or trust. In the Buddhist tradition, we speak of three different types of faith. The first is faith in the form of admiration that you have toward a particular person or a particular state of being. The second is aspiring faith. There is a sense of emulation; you aspire to attain that state of being. The third type is the faith of conviction.

I feel that all three types of faith can be explained in the Christian context as well. For example, a practising Christian, by reading the Gospel and reflecting on the life of Jesus, can have a very strong devotion to and admiration for Jesus. That is the first level of faith, the faith of admiration and devotion. After that, as you strengthen your admiration and faith, it is possible to progress to the second level, which is the faith of aspiration. In the Buddhist tradition, you would aspire to buddhahood. In the Christian context you may not use the same language, but you can say that you aspire to attain the full perfection of the divine nature, or union with God. Then, once you have developed that sense of aspiration, you can develop a deep conviction that it is possible to perfect such a state of being. That is the third level of faith. I feel that all of these levels of faith are equally applicable in both the Buddhist and Christian contexts.¹⁷

Constructive Appreciation of Difference

It is through art that The Venerable Hatigammana Uttarananda, a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, has expressed his encounter with Jesus. At Tulana Research Centre in Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, are several of his works, including a mural of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples and a painting of the gospel story of the woman taken in adultery. The process started for Ven Uttarananda through dialogue with Aloysius

¹⁷ *The Good Heart*, pp. 112-113.

Pieris SJ, Director of Tulana, to whom I am indebted for the account that follows. In the early 1980s, Ven Uttarananda, already an artist, was involved in an organization seeking to educate Buddhist monks about the need in Sri Lanka for inter-ethnic justice. With the intention of holding an exhibition of paintings on Christ and the Buddha, he read the gospels and studied Pieris' collection of Christian art. Pieris suggested to him that in his portrayal of Jesus he should not duplicate themes already central to Buddhism, but rather concentrate on what he saw as specific to Christianity. Taking this to heart, one of his first choices was Jesus washing the feet of his disciples.¹⁸

The mural that resulted now greets visitors to Tulana. It translates the foot-washing story into an Asian context. The disciples are dressed in the robes of Asian renunciants, and carry black bowls to receive gifts of food. They enter the home of a lay person. Instead of a servant bending down to wash the feet of the renunciants, however, it is the master of the house who does this, overturning the customary practice.



¹⁸ The story of this and other works of art done for Tulana Research Centre by Buddhist artists is told in Aloysius Pieris, *Fire and Water: Basic Issues in Asian Buddhism and Christianity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), pp. 127-137.

One of the renunciants holds up his hand in a gesture conveying that something significant is happening.

What is important here is that Ven Uttarananda, searching for the unique in Christianity, chose Jesus reversing power structures, the master becoming slave or, as Pieris terms it, 'Jesus: God of slaves—the slave of God'. As for the picture of the woman caught in adultery, in the middle there is a palm raised in the classical *abhaya mudra*, the 'do not fear' position. A nail mark in the centre shows it to be Jesus Christ's. Around the palm, male aggression swirls and, at the foot of the picture is the woman, imprisoned by this hatred, but also released through Jesus. What is chosen by Uttarananda here is Jesus the champion of the victim and the unmasker of hypocrisy.



Ven Uttarananda's engagement with Christianity in Sri Lanka arose within a context of ethnic conflict, of a scandalous gap between rich and poor, and of violence against women. He was painfully conscious of all of these, and was thus drawn to discover Jesus as challenger of the *status quo*. His approach illustrates the fourth of the tendencies I identified at the beginning, in spite of the inclusivist elements in the mural of Christ washing the feet of the disciples. Difference and uniqueness are taken seriously but they do not become barriers. They become instead sources of inspiration and challenge for both Buddhist and Christian.

Working Towards a Christian Response

My Buddhist speakers have given Jesus a number of faces.

- The angry Jesus, betraying a lack of discernment and of equanimity
- The Jesus who is so inextricably connected with exclusivist christologies that he becomes an oppressive force
- Jesus, the epitome of mindfulness, of meditation in action, and embodiment of the Way all must follow
- Jesus the bodhisattva, master of the perfections which include patience and wisdom
- Jesus the overturner of the structures of the powerful and unmasker of hypocrisy.

How should Christians react to these? Should Christians simply accept that, in our postmodern world, it is impossible to create one narrative for Jesus, and be content with creating their own Jesus to satisfy their deepest yearnings? Should they ignore not only the views of other faiths but also the variety of perspectives within their own tradition, and simply carry on as they always have done, asserting that their particular take on Jesus delivers absolute truth? Or is there a middle path?

I believe we have to explore this final option, and I would like to put forward four basic principles that may help us do this:

- Jesus is not the possession of Christians alone

- Christians cannot and should not claim for themselves sole authority to interpret the significance of his life and death
- The perspectives on Jesus expressed by Buddhists, and indeed by sincere spiritual seekers whatever their worldview, can be used by Christians as they undertake constructive interrogation of their own faith and seek new patterns of discipleship
- Sometimes that which is most creative can emerge precisely where the difference is greatest between traditional Christian belief about Jesus and the perspectives on Jesus taken adopted by people of other faiths.

When encountering Buddhist views about Jesus, Christians might well say at certain points, 'We clearly differ. We, as Christians, stand here. You stand there. Let it not be a cause for conflict.' But if Christians use such a strategy to avoid asking hard questions about truth claims, they will be the poorer. The more enriching path, I would suggest, is one that invites a certain amount of vulnerability through a willingness really to hear the witness of people of other faiths, and then to re-evaluate, to interrogate, both one's own beliefs and the message that the Christian church is offering to the world.

By now, many readers of this essay will have noted which of the Buddhist perspectives on Jesus they most easily identify with. I imagine that Thich Nhat Hanh might appeal to those seeking to combine meditation with social action, Ven Uttarananda to those who wish to see beyond accepted social or religious norms, and Rita Gross to those who are uncomfortable with exclusivist interpretations of some Bible verses. However, a more challenging path involves engagement with the perspective that one finds most difficult. Those who prefer an exclusivist christological message could engage with the abhorrence such a message creates in some sincere spiritual seekers, or with the re-interpretation of John 14:6 given by Thich Nhat Hanh. Those who, from positions of comfort, see Jesus as the Comforter, or as the one who blesses his beloved with material gifts, should engage with Ven Uttarananda's vision of Jesus as the one who overturns the security of the affluent.

Speaking personally and by way of example, I needed to engage with those who are mystified by the anger of Jesus. The need for righteous anger, about the gap between the world's rich and poor, for example, or racism, was something I accepted without question before my encounter with Buddhism. I can remember using Linton Kwesi Johnson's early poems when teaching English in the late 1970s, poems that spoke of the anger of black young people in the racist Britain of those years.¹⁹ Engagement with Buddhism, however, has led me to reclaim the Christian concept of discernment, which involves developing the ability to identify inner attachments that cloud judgement and fuel unhelpful responses. I still believe anger can be part of the Christian response to injustice, but I can see its dangers in a much clearer light. Buddhism has made me more aware that anger without discernment, without awareness of our greeds and our hatreds, can be counterproductive and dangerous. It has convinced me that the inner task of mental culture is just as important as the external task of fighting injustice. It has turned me towards the inwardness of Jesus, his mindfulness and his need for silence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, I would like to urge Christians towards engagement, exploration and self-interrogation when faced with perspectives on Jesus from people of other faiths, in this case Buddhists. This should be undertaken neither in the cosy belief that all religions are the same nor with an impressionability that takes the voice of other faiths as a new gospel, but rather in robust awareness that interaction with views differing from one's own can be creative and indeed transforming. And this brings me back to my fourth tendency, the one that I find most creative. It goes beyond my definitions of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. It affirms that sincere spiritual seekers within other faiths have something to give to us Christians. It enjoins exploration and pilgrimage. May the quest for the historical Jesus go on. May Christians continue to listen to the world Church and the voices of liberation theology. However, my dream is of a Christianity that is able to receive from other faiths, that recognises that it cannot do Christology, or indeed any theology, if it

¹⁹ Linton Kwesi Johnson, *Dread, Beat and Blood* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1975).

draws only on the traditions of the Christian Church and Graeco-Roman antiquity. It must engage with the spiritual heritage of the whole world.

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RECENT BOOKS

Michael Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). 0-521-00908-1, pp. 288, £17.95.

It is not every author who can get away with telling readers that they are forced to cross boundaries 'whether they like it or not'. We are more used to being cajoled, persuaded, invited, even begged to do the right thing. *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions* is pervaded by a sense of the urgency of the task at hand, and Michael Barnes has no hesitation in throwing out such a blunt challenge. This book, unlike many in the area, is grounded in years of experience of inter-faith work. Thus its starting point is not the doctrine of salvation or of revelation, but rather the givenness of the religiously 'other' with whom I am faced—in reality, not just in theory. The presence of the other calls me to develop a theology that not only speaks of the God who is revealed in Christ, but listens critically, yet with generosity, to what is spoken about God by the other. So the theology of dialogue is seen as primarily an ethical issue. We do not have the luxury of simply leaving it to the theological academy; the other in our midst has a legitimate claim on our attention and respect.

A certain amount of undergrowth needs to be cleared before exploring this terrain in a new way. In an introductory chapter the author criticizes the simplistic way in which the theology of religions is commonly divided into inclusivist, exclusivist, and pluralist positions. For some years it has been becoming clear that these divisions do not serve us well. More importantly Barnes rejects of the idea that we are gradually moving from exclusivism (where only those who belong to our group are saved), through inclusivism (where all are saved because all belong to our group whether they realise it or not), towards a pluralism that recognises the irreducible differences among us, and settles for respectful tolerance.

The apparently tolerant vision of the pluralists has a certain seductiveness, but on closer inspection it is seen to be no more respectful of the other than the two former positions. The pluralists claim to recognise a core of values and goals common to all religions, and maintain

that, to the extent that each religion embodies these values, it is a valid way to salvation (as though salvation itself were a concept common to all religions). But the pluralist project only succeeds in creating another religious vision alongside those that already exist, and in claiming absolute validity for this rather in the manner that the particular religions do for themselves. What is more, this new 'religion' looks suspiciously like a cross between the secular humanism and liberal Christianity that form the backgrounds of its proponents.

Barnes' analysis makes a great deal of the change wrought in the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic Church by the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially by those on the relation of the Church to other communities of faith (*Nostra aetate*) and to the modern world (*Gaudium et spes*). In these conciliar declarations one sees a church faced with the other. It is coming to understand itself not over against, but in relationship to the other, who is neither reducible to sameness, nor so foreign as to be incomprehensible and unapproachable. Barnes explores the Council's recognition that the Christian faith depends in some sense for its own coherence on the living tradition of Judaism. All Christian theology has to be done at least implicitly within a Jewish matrix. This means that the theology of religions is not merely about 'family resemblances' or the comparability of various religious traditions, but rather about the much more unsettling issues of self-identity in relationship. Barnes draws on the work of the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas—a man with little time for theology, but still one who has provided contemporary Christian theology with invaluable insights. Using De Certeau, Levinas, and also the critique of the latter's thought by Paul Ricoeur, Barnes explores the questions of self and other as they touch on the inter-faith project.

One of the key concepts of Barnes' treatment is what he calls 'negotiation of the middle'—not just an exploration of the space where persons meet, he says, but an exploration of the relationship that the space supports. That relationship will, if I am truly Christian, affect me, change me. In acknowledging the other, the Council has opened up a process which risks fragmenting our sense of self. It is easy to see why it has provoked such profound reactions, often focussed on liturgical, catechetical, or other changes. Yet Barnes sees no way of avoiding this risk. It is the risk taken by Christ himself.

In this book Barnes has not tried to develop an inter-faith christology. Rather he wants to tackle what he sees as a prior task: establishing the foundations of a theology of dialogue, a theology which would take seriously the providential mystery of otherness for the life of the Church as

a whole. Those who have worked in the inter-faith field will constantly hear in Barnes' writing echoes of their experience of otherness and of the questions it raises. However, even though it is rooted in experience, this is not at all a 'how-to' book. Two important chapters offer by way of example an examination of how the shift in emphasis Barnes has been discussing has played out in India—beginning with the inculturation strategies of de Nobili and the later ashram movement, and moving towards 'Dalit theology' in which the engagement with the other has acquired, as it must, a distinctly ethical, even political edge. The philosophical and theological complexity of the questions at issue is demanding, but the style throughout the book is almost meditative, circling around and examining things from every side, always finding new aspects and insights, drawing us deeper, opening new possibilities for further reflection.

For me, one of the pleasures of this book was gaining a fresh sense of what has become a rather hackneyed term in theology of religions and missiology: 'seeds of the Word'. This conciliar term is sometimes used as a grudging admission that God has been at work in other religions. However, these seeds usually seem to be viewed as wizened and shrivelled—missed opportunities, frustrated developments. Samuel Rayan among others has commented that if 'seeds of the Word' are detectable in the faith and practice of other religious communities, then surely there must be shoots and branches as well. In Michael Barnes' view of the inter-faith encounter, the seeds are neither the dried-up reminder of a past divine initiative, nor a fruitfulness merely reserved to the other. They are seeds waiting to be sown in us by the God whose Word is never exhausted, and who addresses us even now in the encounter with the religious other.

Daniel A. Madigan SJ

Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2002). 0-674-00760-3, pp. viii + 127, £13.95.

While preparing his 1998-1999 Edinburgh Gifford Lectures, which sought to give an account of what it means to call our age 'secular', the philosopher Charles Taylor realised that one essential source would be another set of Giffords, delivered in Edinburgh a century earlier: William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*. It occurred to Professor Taylor that it would be worth attempting to say something 'about the place of religion in our secular age, in the form of a conversation/confrontation with James' (p.

vi). This, then, is what—in these brief, lucid, learned lectures, delivered in Vienna in 2000—he sets out to do.

He finds James' classic to be astonishingly little dated: even his 'blind spots' about religion 'are widespread in the modern world' (pp. 3-4). James, we might say, would have understood why (to put it in contemporary jargon) so many people these days think highly of 'spirituality' but have little time for 'religion'. He himself was not fond of churches, of those institutions through which an originally powerful individual experience was communicated, domesticated, distorted and betrayed. For him, 'the *real* locus of religion is in individual experience, and not in corporate life. That is one facet of the Jamesian thesis. But the other is that the real locus is in *experience*, that is, in feeling' (p. 7).

So: *real* religion is personal commitment; ritual, custom and conformity are, at best, suspect and, at worst, despised. Taylor traces the Jamesian 'take' on religion from late-medieval devotion through the Reformation and Counter-Reformation to those versions of it which flourish in contemporary Western societies. He argues, perceptively, that the secularist shares with the Jamesian believer the conviction that individual conviction is what matters, but supposes that 'a really inward commitment', opening our eyes to the illusory character of faith, would thereby 'free us from religion' (p. 13). But, if 'James's position thus emerges from the main sweep of Latin Christendom over centuries' (p. 15), it can be more exactly situated: 'His model is more George Fox the Quaker than it is St François de Sales . . . he sides with the religion of the heart over that of the head' (p. 18).

The trouble is that, 'just because of the close fit between James's take on religion and certain aspects of modern culture, one might easily run away with the idea that what James describes as religious experience is the only form religion can assume today' (p. 22). Against this temptation, Taylor reminds us that James was incorrigibly individualist, that 'he hasn't got place for a collective connection through a common way of being' (p. 24), and that the notion of sacramental communion had no place on his map. Moreover, beyond the fact that there are 'widespread religious forms' which cannot be accommodated within the Jamesian account, there are more troubling questions (which Taylor, the philosopher, gently raises) concerning the very *coherence* of James' account of what does and does not constitute 'experience'.

The 'Twice-Born'

Having thus broadly situated James' understanding of religion 'on the map of modern religious phenomena' (p. 29), Taylor focuses on what he sees as

‘the very heart of James’s discussion . . . the description of the plight of the “twice-born”’ (p. 33). The ‘once-born’, for James, are those who ‘have the sense that all is well with the world and/or that they are on the right side of God’ (p. 33). James (who had himself suffered from clinical depression) contrasts these ‘healthy’ souls with the ‘sick’, who ‘cannot help but see the pain, the loss, the evil, the suffering in the world’ (p. 33). Unlike the healthy, the sick ‘see the abyss over which we stand’ (p. 34).

Sickness may take several forms: the sense of a world without meaning, or of an evil world, or of personal sin and guilt. ‘Those who have been through this kind of thing and come out at the other side are the “twice-born”’ (p. 36), those who have experienced personal deliverance. All three forms of sickness continue to flourish (if that is the right word) in our own day.

In the first place, Taylor notes that where religion as deliverance from personal guilt is concerned, ‘the surge of evangelical Protestantism often occurs in contexts where community has broken down’ (p. 38). These are contexts in which, in chaotic circumstances and without adequate systems of support, overwhelmed by a sense of personal incapacity, individuals find deliverance through surrender to experience of conversion. In the second place, sickness as the melancholy born of loss of meaning has a new shape: no longer exclusion from the meanings other people share, it now intimates ‘what may be a definitive emptiness, the final dawning of the end of the last illusion of significance’ (p. 40). If the third version of the abyss, the sense of all things swamped in evil, is less widely recognised than the other two, this may be because ‘we sometimes take flight into the meaninglessness of things in order to avoid facing’ this even darker nightmare (p. 42).

Religion and Rationality

Many of James’ contemporaries, like many of our own, took it for granted that religion was a thing of the past, superseded now by rationality. Religion gullibly believes on fragile or nonexistent evidence, whereas agnostic secularity insists that ‘we can win the right to believe a hypothesis only by first treating it with maximum suspicion’ (p. 46). James, in contrast, urges that it is not credulous to acknowledge that ‘there are some domains in which truths will be hidden from us unless we go halfway toward them’. We are required to choose, but the choice that faces us is not between ‘faith’ and ‘reason’, but rather between ‘two risks of loss of truth’ (p. 49), for if credulity may lead us into folly and illusion, scepticism may close our hearts and blind us to the truth.

In Taylor's sensitive and by no means unsympathetic hands, William James thus comes across as one who 'opened up to view an important part of the struggle between belief and unbelief in modern culture' (p. 52) as a struggle between two ethics of believing. And if he abandoned so much of the traditional substance of religion—its social, sacramental and intellectual character—the key issue that remains stands out with even greater clarity: what are we to make of the gut instinct that there is something more to all this than just brute fact?

Was James not only perceptive but prescient? In other words, is the kind of world into which we are now moving one that strikingly resembles 'the rather stripped-down religious landscape of James?' (p. 64). Taylor's answer to this question is: not quite. He reaches this conclusion through a two-stage analysis of how we came to where we now seem, religiously, to be: a discussion of 'the secularisation of the public sphere' is followed by a some reflections on 'the new individualism'.

Secularisation

On secularisation, Taylor's story, in a nutshell, goes like this. Before modernity, we lived 'in societies in which the presence of God was unavoidable' (p. 64), in an 'enchanted world' in which 'there is a strong contrast between sacred and profane'. 'By the sacred', Taylor explains, 'I mean certain places, like churches; certain times, like high feasts; certain actions, like saying the Mass' (p. 65).

Then, with the dawning of modernity, the presence of God 'no longer lies in the sacred, because this category fades in a disenchanted world' (p. 66), but is discerned in the discernment of design, of patterns of cosmic and moral order. Thus there emerged, especially in the United States, the kind of 'civil religion' which sees, in a nation's fulfilment of its destiny, the execution of a divine plan. Few United States citizens doubt that their country is, in Abraham Lincoln's words, 'the last, best hope of earth'. But the struggle, today, is between those who continue to interpret this 'manifest destiny' in religious terms and those who (for a variety of often mutually incompatible reasons) refuse to do so.

If the development of civil religion has been the United States' somewhat exceptional path to the secularisation of the public sphere, more generally the development of denominationalism has played a central part, because denominations are, essentially, voluntary bodies and, in this sense, 'denominational identity tends to separate religion from the state' (p. 74).

While agreeing with Taylor that Western societies have become comprehensively secularised in the sense that what we usually think of as religious institutions (churches, and so on) have far less influence in the

‘public sphere’ than once they did, and religious beliefs are far less easily accepted, I nevertheless have difficulties with his account. It all goes back to his original description of the distinction between the sacred and the profane. Taylor takes this to be a distinction between different things of the same kind: different places, times, and actions. It would then seem to follow that, if this is a church, it can’t be a museum, or a government office; if this is a religious action, it can’t be a political one; and so on.

For Emile Durkheim, in contrast, who once famously defined religion as ‘the system of symbols by means of which society becomes conscious of itself’, religious rituals would be those practices that are concerned with whatever a society deems sacred: deems too hot to handle, too dangerous to touch. On this account, in our society, the list of religious rituals might include, for example, beliefs and practices protective of ‘the market’, which is one of the many gods we worship. (Taylor makes frequent reference to Durkheim, but seems to understand the great sociologist in a rather curious way.)

What I am suggesting, however, is that Charles Taylor’s story of ‘the secularisation of the public sphere’ seems too readily to take for granted those notions of what is to count as ‘religion’ and what as ‘politics’ which were constructed, in early modern culture, precisely in order to keep the churches safely at the margins of the newly constructed ‘public sphere’.

The New Individualism

The process which we call ‘secularisation’ has been under way for several centuries. In the last few decades, however, ‘something has happened . . . which has profoundly altered the conditions of belief in our societies’ (pp. 79-80). What has happened, according to Taylor, is the development, as a mass phenomenon, of what he calls “‘expressive” individualism’ (p. 80), the belief that each individual has their own way of realising their humanity. ‘The resulting general structure’, he says, ‘is not that of common action, but rather of mutual display’ (p. 85) (hence the term ‘expressivism’).

Central to the ethics of this individualism are certain ideals of fairness and of respect for each other’s freedom: ‘The sin that is not tolerated is intolerance’ (p. 89). Where religion is concerned, expressive individualism takes us far beyond the uncoupling of church and state which secularisation achieved: ‘In the new expressivist dispensation, there is no necessary embedding of our link to the sacred in any particular broader framework’ (p. 95), whether religious or political. ‘In an age that seems dominated by the “learned despisers of religion” . . . what is really valuable is spiritual insight/feeling’ (p. 100). The only commandment left would seem to be: ‘let everyone follow his or her own path of spiritual inspiration’

(p. 100). But does this not mean that William James was, after all, dead right?

Not quite, according to Charles Taylor, and he proposes three key features of our situation today 'which we might miss if we went away with a too-simple notion of James's undoubted prescience' (p. 111). In the first place, the fact that 'our relation to the spiritual is being more and more unhooked from our relation to our political societies' (p. 111) (a claim that I, personally, would question) says nothing in itself about the extent to which, against James' individualism, contemporary spirituality may be socially, sacramentally, traditionally mediated. In the second place, whatever one's evaluation of it, the religious focus of ethnic or national identity remains, from the Christian Right in the United States, to the Likud party in the state of Israel and the BJP in India, 'a powerful reality in today's world' (p. 115). Finally, James seems to have underrated the extent to which the development of symbolic and ritual practices may be the means of the continuation, rather than the ossification or corruption, of the original religious impulse: 'Many people are not satisfied with a momentary sense of wow!' (p. 116).

When I first read this gently prophetic little book, distracted, perhaps, by my sense that Charles Taylor and I read, not only Durkheim, but the entire *grammar* of what counts as 'politics' and as 'religion', very differently, I felt that he made too many concessions to contemporary fashions in religion and spirituality. I now think that judgement was mistaken, and that the book is something of a masterpiece of *diagnosis*. Beyond the vacuous and exhausted slogans (especially in the United States) of 'conservatism', 'liberalism' and 'dissent', what we have here, from one of the most distinguished Catholic philosophers in the English-speaking world, is a courageous and persistently attentive examination, devoid of all polemic, of the situation in which we find ourselves. He has, I think, shown us more or less where we are. It is up to us to decide where we might go from here, and how we might begin to move in that direction.

Nicholas Lash

Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev, *The Mystery of Faith: An Introduction to the Teaching and Spirituality of the Orthodox Church*, edited by Jessica Rose (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002). 0-232-52472-6, pp. xviii + 270, £12.95.

Hitherto there has been little variety in what one might offer someone wanting to learn more about Orthodox life and doctrine, in fact nothing much more than Bishop Kallistos Ware's incomparable books, *The Orthodox Church* and *The Orthodox Way*, and the oddly entitled book by Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*. The publication of Bishop Hilarion's book is therefore very welcome. (It has already been published in French, where books on Orthodoxy seem to be like buses: you wait for ages and then three come along—as well as Bishop Hilarion's book, we have recently had Fr Placide Deseille's *Certitude de l'Invisible*, and the rather different *Le Silence des anges* by Jean-François Colosimo.) Bishop Hilarion is the newly appointed representative of the Russian Orthodox Church at the European Union, where he has already made his mark in a series of bulletins (called *Europaica*) in which Orthodox concerns have been expressed uncompromisingly and intelligently. Although still young, he has already accomplished a good deal, including acquiring a doctorate for a thesis on St Symeon the New Theologian under Bishop Kallistos' supervision, which has already been published by Oxford University Press. His publications in his native Russian are awesome: at least half-a-dozen substantial and learned volumes.

The influence of his supervisor is manifest in the present book. Like *The Orthodox Way*, Bishop Hilarion's book is deeply patristic in its approach, and each chapter ends with a series of quotations from the Fathers (including—in accordance with the Orthodox understanding of the Fathers—those still alive, such as Bishop Kallistos and Metropolitan Anthony): the inclusion of such a patristic anthology recalls, too, Henri de Lubac's famous book, *Catholicism*. What characterizes Bishop Hilarion's book, as well as all the others mentioned, is that they are personal introductions to Orthodoxy, not official statements, though that does not make them any the less authoritative.

Bishop Hilarion's book consists of eleven chapters divided up into relatively short sections, all of which are listed in the table of contents, making it easy to find one's way around, and so consult it as well as read it through. The headings of the chapters are: The Search for Faith, God, The Trinity, Creation, The Human Person, Christ, The Church, The Sacraments, Prayer, Deification, The Life of the Age to Come. Everything

is presented clearly; there are frequent references to the Fathers, complemented by anthologies of texts at the end of each chapter.

Bishop Hilarion's gift for conciseness enables him to cover a great deal of ground. Inevitably there are some omissions. More seriously, on a number of occasions, brevity leads to what seems to me to be an evasion of problems. It is simply asserted, for example, that human beings are at the centre of the universe, despite the fact that it is not so clear what this means if a geocentric view is abandoned, and the earth is seen as a smallish planet in orbit round an averagely-sized star in one among many galaxies. A similar problem arises with the discussion of Paradise and the Fall; for, although Bishop Hilarion sketches out an approach to 'myth', based on the Russian philosopher, A. F. Losev (p. 65), that could provide some sort of an answer, this is done so briefly that it looks like evasion, rather than a response. In general, the constraints of brevity produce (or just heighten?) an impression of 'take it or leave it'. Occasionally this style of writing is refreshing, as when Bishop Hilarion sees off Renan and Tolstoy (p. 81), or makes his trenchant remarks on the language of gender in relation to God (pp. 20-21) and the question of the priestly ordination of women (p. 108). But more generally, it gives the impression of not really being interested in problems that some (even deeply faithful Orthodox) cannot avoid entertaining.

Though he wears his learning lightly, Bishop Hilarion is a considerable patristic scholar. Specialists will find points of detail to question, and others might find evidence of an anti-Western bias. But in general Bishop Hilarion is extremely irenic. Indeed his discussion of the difference between East and West on the doctrine of the Trinity leads into a discussion of the attitude of the Cappadocian Fathers to schism from which Bishop Hilarion is led to suggest that they were 'much more "liberal" than the most advanced "ecumenists" of today' (p. 126). This generous spirit is especially marked in his discussion of the Last Things in the final chapter. Here Bishop Hilarion lays great emphasis on the tradition, especially strong in the East, not least in the liturgical prayers, that refuses to extinguish the hope that in the end love will prevail with all.

Translating a book from one language to another is not just a matter of translating the text, particularly not in a book such as this, where there are so many quotations from other authors. Much of the purpose of the book is frustrated if references are left to editions in the 'home' language, for they cannot, except with great difficulty, be followed up, and part of the point of quotation is to offer the reader further reading. The editor has in general done a fine job here. Bishop Hilarion's use of Russian sources is another

attractive feature of the book, revealing riches that it would be wonderful to have available in English: his namesake, Archbishop Hilarion Troitsky; Losev; Florensky; Ilyin; and also much by Metropolitan Anthony that remains untranslated. This is a rich and rewarding book.

Andrew Louth

Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching 1891–Present: A Historical, Theological and Ethical Analysis* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002). 0-87840-881-9, pp. x + 262, £15.

Charles Curran, one of the foremost figures in contemporary moral theology, offers in this book an introduction to Roman Catholic social ethics, examining the documents which are commonly considered to constitute the backbone of that tradition. Curran traces how the method and content of Catholic social teaching developed. Readers who are unfamiliar with Curran's work might like to begin with the Afterword. In it he makes clear the logic which guides the book, as well as making explicit his own convictions.

Part I is a lucid analysis and critique of the documents from three perspectives: theological, ethical and ecclesial. It is not a linear account of their contents. Specific aspects of the teaching are treated thematically within his overall analysis. Whereas other summary accounts such as that of Donal Dorr proceed by going through each document in turn, Curran structures his account thematically, although he also says illuminating things about how the different texts were influenced by historical contexts. He pays particular attention to developments and changes, especially the change from a classicist understanding of natural law (which tends to see reality in terms of the eternal, the immutable and the unchanging) to one based on historical consciousness. Such a method, by definition, arrives at its conclusions by examining different contingent, historical situations. This is his main focus, informing most of his criticism of pre-Vatican II documents. Inevitably this gives a slightly lop-sided view of them, because he is not assessing the social teaching as such, but rather the framework in which it developed. Therefore he rather misses much that was, in fact, of value at the time.

Catholic social teaching generally presents itself as universally valid, as applying impartially, and as offering certitude. Curran's claims about natural law raise questions about these presuppositions; he is also aware of liberationist ethics, feminist ethics and the challenges of postmodernism.

Nevertheless, he believes that Catholic social teaching, despite all these challenges, should still maintain the style of reasoning that has become traditional, albeit in a more nuanced and chastened way.

Part II analyses the content of the documents, which Curran characterizes as the teaching of general perspectives for a just social order. Of fundamental importance, therefore, is the vision of the human person on which the teaching is based. One's understanding of the human person influences, grounds and directs one's understanding of how human society should function. Catholic social teaching has, since Vatican II, developed a more personalist understanding. The human person is defined in a dynamic manner which stresses authentic freedom and marks a move to the subject. Curran sees this development as a positive contribution towards a social ethics grounded in the principles of dignity of the human person and in the social nature of the human person. But he also points to shortcomings arising from a tendency to take a too optimistic view. Catholic social teaching, unlike Catholic sexual ethics, tends to downplay the power of sin, and to emphasize human reason as a basis for dialogue with all people of good will. This can lead to the lack of any real analysis of how sin operates in the public forum. The reliance on natural law comes at the expense, in Curran's view, of a really well integrated theological method. Moreover, because the documents propose authoritative teaching, they are general and avoid specific positions on complex issues. This can lead to rhetorical affirmations with surprisingly little content. For example, with all their ringing demands for human rights, the documents slide over the deeper question of the exact relationship between rights and duties. Neither does the teaching address the most pressing practical question of human rights: How does one solve a conflict of rights?

Curran has written the best one-volume synthesis of the key features of Catholic social teaching that I have seen. It manages the difficult task of being of interest both to those who come fresh to the teaching and to those with a scholarly knowledge of it.

Catherine Cowley ra

George A. Lindbeck, *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (London: SCM Press, 2002). 0-334-02880-9, pp. 300, £15.95.

This fascinating anthology provides samples of the extraordinarily creative writings of George Lindbeck, arranged by James Buckley around the theme of Lindbeck's still developing ecclesiology. Buckley's introduction to each

chapter provides useful background information to Lindbeck's writings, and goes some way towards illuminating his denser texts. Lindbeck's theology is classified by Buckley as a 'radical tradition' that is at once evangelical, catholic and postliberal (p. vii). Lindbeck is in fact a Lutheran who seeks to alter quite radically the direction that Lutheranism is taking. At the same time he is at the forefront of the postliberal attempt to reinterpret Christian faith in such a way as to take into account the conditioning of human knowing. In addition he is heavily involved in, and deeply committed to, the ecumenical movement. The texts are taken from Lindbeck's numerous published essays and lectures, and from his ground-breaking major work, *The Nature of Doctrine* (1984).

In Lindbeck's view, Lutheranism initially set out to be a reform movement within the Catholic Church of the West, but was unjustly expelled by the Catholic communion. Its mission therefore can be fulfilled, and its proper identity regained, only by reunion with Rome. Against this background Lindbeck discusses the contentious issue of infallible teaching. He points out that the Reformers did not deny that there are infallible dogmas; rather they denied the existence of an infallible teaching office within the Church. He suggests that agreement between Protestants and Roman Catholics might be possible with regard to both papal and conciliar infallibility, as long as it were established that for a teaching to be regarded as infallible it must be received by the Church. The Church in Lindbeck's thinking comprises the totality of Christian communities, and on this account he views positively the refusal of the Second Vatican Council to identify the limits of the Church of Christ with the Roman communion (p. 128). The prospects for union, he believes, depend on agreement over 'reception' and what he calls 'full ecumenicity' (p. 129) with regard to the identification of the Church. However, he suggests that the real sticking point is the Roman notion of *a priori* infallibility, a papal infallibility which requires no *a posteriori* verifying tests in scripture, tradition or the present faith of the Church. Even so, he sees hopeful signs with regard to this issue coming from the teachings of the 'moderate infallibilists', Walter Kasper and Karl Rahner (p. 141).

Lindbeck turns to the Hebrew Scriptures, 'the ecclesiological text *par excellence*' (p. 150), to inform his understanding of the Church. He concludes that, when Israel's story is seen as the prototype for the history of the Church, the identity of the Church rests not on its faithfulness but on God's election. The Church, for Lindbeck, comprises all Christian communities, whether wayward or faithful. It consists of all those, whether atheists or believers, 'who are stamped with the marks of membership in elect communities' (p. 158). Its primary mission is to witness to the God

who judges and who saves, thus its primary task 'should be to build up sisters and brothers in the faith, not to liberate the oppressed everywhere' (p. 159). The Church, according to Lindbeck, is the continuation rather than the fulfillment of Israel's story, 'transposed into a new key through Christ' (p. 150), and Christians should learn from Jews to take special responsibility for all their communities.

Lindbeck has now come to think that his long-planned work on comparative dogmatics should start with ecclesiology, and that this should include what he terms 'Israel-ology' (p. 200). He currently stresses what he sees as the importance to ecumenism of rethinking the relationship between Israel and the Church on the basis that they are one elect people.

Lindbeck is perhaps best known for the 'cultural-linguistic' approach to religion that he sets out in *The Nature of Doctrine*, and Buckley includes its concluding chapter in this anthology. Lindbeck treats religion essentially as 'language' which shapes and is shaped by a way of life. Religions are characterized by sacred texts and a semiotic system (interpretive and communicative signs, symbols and actions), and can be likened to a culture. The 'cultural-linguistic' approach, says Lindbeck, is 'intratextual', in contrast to the 'extratextual' approach of both conservative and liberal Protestantism (p. 173). Prompted by his reading of Wittgenstein, Lindbeck insists that religious meaning is located not outside but *within* the sacred text or semiotic system. Lindbeck's claim is that by means of 'second-order concepts' (doctrines), theology can describe everything as 'inside' (p. 174). The meaning of Scripture is not located outside itself, but rather is itself the lens through which theologians see the world. Lindbeck argues (unsuccessfully in my view) that intratextuality need not imply relativism or fideism.

Lindbeck invokes David Kelsey and Karl Barth in support of the view that what holds together Scripture's diverse literary forms is an overarching story, or more specifically a realistic narrative. Realistic narratives characteristically 'render the identity description of an agent'. The canonical narrative offers 'an identity description' of an agent, namely God (p. 180). (Lindbeck's critics might want to question the philosophy of God that underlies this identification.)

Some of the most telling passages in this anthology are those where Lindbeck expresses his puzzlement at certain hostile reactions to the first edition of *The Nature of Doctrine*. One gets the impression overall that Lindbeck is generally oblivious to the hostile reactions that his treatment of various traditions might provoke. With regard to the response to *The Nature of Doctrine*, he says that not only were his ideas borrowed and therefore in his view unsurprising, but they were used 'in a theologically

neutral way'. This supposed theological neutrality is perhaps open to question. Nonetheless, the wealth and originality of his ideas make Lindbeck an influential figure on the current theological scene, and this volume provides a useful and up-to-date introduction to his work so far.

Anne Inman

Wendy M. Wright, *Sacred Heart: Gateway to God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002). 0-232-524548, pp. 134, £12.95.

In her preface, Wendy M. Wright describes this book about the Sacred Heart as 'a meandering, rummaging response to an intellectual obsession'. This is an honest description that warns the reader not to expect meticulous academic analysis or an obvious framework of ideas which follow in a neat progression. The metaphor of rummaging fits well: the book reminds me of joyful afternoons spent without any driving purpose, looking through long-lost items in the attic and finding unexpected treasures.

A modern-day book about the Sacred Heart is a brave venture, since this devotion, like so many others, is complicated by imagery and vocabulary that are largely inaccessible to us today, by centuries of spiritual and political ambivalence, and by the very poor service done to it by a style of art more noted for enthusiasm than skill. Wright acknowledges that her own theological perspective has been concentrated on a broad, cosmic concept of God, effectively losing the person of Jesus. Hovering in the background are the author's fathers, both biological and spiritual, who have encouraged her to explore the intersection between visual art and religion. She offers her book as a way of reclaiming the mystery of Jesus through the story of devotion to the Sacred Heart, into which she weaves personal reflections, poetry, visual imagery and song. The book is thus an eclectic mixture of history and theology, lyricism and reminiscence, that does not easily fit into established categories of spiritual or theological writing. But it is a courageous and imaginative attempt to reinterpret and reclaim the Sacred Heart tradition for a modern audience that is both spiritually serious and theologically curious.

There is much here that is autobiographical; the author's 'meander' is through her own journey into Catholicism, as well as through the history of references to the heart of Jesus from Ignatius of Antioch and Origen, through Bernard and the Beguines, to the medieval mystics and the *devotio moderna*. Her writing emerges from a stage of spiritual life at which the

centre no longer holds and the Church's everyday life seems hollow: music degenerates into liturgical conflict, love is obstructed by regulations, and divisive issues prevent communities from engaging genuinely with one another. Wright expresses that thirst of the heart that, amid all this conflict and aridity, surely motivates so much of the modern search for direct spiritual experience. As so many of the quarrels of the immediate post-conciliar decades fade away, the need that many experience for *mystagogia* remains unsatisfied. In this context a retrieval of devotion to the Sacred Heart is a welcome contribution.

What we are offered is a discovery of the heart as the centre of being, where we are invited to experience God, our fellow humans and ourselves differently. Wright is well versed in the Salesian and Ignatian traditions, but also takes us into patristic and medieval territory in our journey towards the heart, as well as into Methodist and Pietist affirmations of affective experience in the spiritual life. Through an exploration of historical sources we find a place in which erotic love, mystical union, and cosmic redemption converge. Wright's 'rummaging' brings to light rich seams of tradition too long neglected, from the history of devotion to the wounds of Christ to the theological links between the Sacred Heart and the Eucharist. But there are also some useful insights into modern scholarship, and perceptive discussions of the intersection between the spiritual and the political in the ideas of twentieth-century leaders like Gandhi and Martin Luther King. The early twentieth-century liturgical renewal, spearheaded in America by Dom Virgil Michel alongside his great European colleagues, offered new insights into the way in which the Eucharist operates to transform the human community as well as the individual recipient. Within the Eucharistic community, devotion to the Sacred Heart, far from being a cloying wallow in dubious theology and tacky sentimentality, becomes the basis for a spirituality of radical conversion, for exchanging a heart of stone for a heart of flesh. Wright looks at the 'layered reality' that she perceives is at the heart of the Catholic imagination. There is mysticism but there is also action. That Sacred Heart devotion might converge with the theory of non-violence is one of the most interesting claims in her book.

In an era when violence and abuse against women and children has acquired demonic status, the idea of being a 'victim' is difficult to defend or even understand. Wright makes a spirited attempt to deal with the aspects of the Sacred Heart tradition that leave most modern stomachs queasy. The devotion that grew up in the aftermath of the French Revolution and extended into the nineteenth century had what now seem excesses, and these perhaps need more detailed and nuanced treatment than they

receive here; both the political context and issues about language need fuller exploration. The difficulties involved in a revival of devotion to the Heart of Jesus should not be underestimated; I would have been interested to see a more thorough exploration of the contributions made by Karl Rahner and Teilhard de Chardin than the tantalizing references here. But all in all, this book offers the reader a gentle meander through rich pastures in need of re-exploration. It gives us a timely reminder of spiritual and theological treasures in Christianity's attic, waiting to be rummaged through.

Gemma Simmonds IBVM

***Shaping a Theological Mind: Theological Context and Methodology*, edited by Darren C. Marks (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002). 0-7546-0617-1, pp. x + 144, £15.99 pb, £37.50 hb.**

***Hopkins Variations: Standing Round a Waterfall*, edited by Joaquin Kuhn and Joseph J. Feeney (Philadelphia and New York: St Joseph's University Press and Fordham University Press, 2002). 0-916101-39-8, pp. xxii + 316, \$37.00.**

These are books of personal testimony, in which scholars—for the most part—tell the story of how they discovered an enthusiasm. Darren Marks, 'a youngish would-be theologian, fresh out of graduate studies, and imbued with a sense of wonder', has brought together autobiographical pieces from an impressively wide and ecumenical range of theological celebrities. We have liberationist figures such as Cone, Radford Ruether, and Moltmann; a biblical exegete who has enriched theology by drawing on the human sciences (Meeks); two rather different Oxford theologians intensely concerned with how the natural sciences should influence theology (Ward, McGrath); the *doyen* of Radical Orthodoxy (Millbank); post-liberals (Farley, Gunton, Webster, Kathryn Tanner); and a Roman Catholic professor at the Gregorian University (O'Collins). The book reminds us how even theologians who despise 'spirituality' are motivated by a quest for God. It also illustrates well the main lines of thinking and feeling among contemporary academic theologians, both in the content of the different pieces and also in their tone and style. This editor-reviewer could only feel wry sympathy for Darren Marks on reading Millbank's piece, for example. Stimulating though it may be, it is more than twice as long as anyone else's and blatantly off the brief the authors were given.

The Hopkins book is rather longer, containing some 55 pieces, by poets, academics, painters, musicians, actors, and priests. Norman H. MacKenzie contributes a valuable account of his life's work as a devoted editor of the texts, and readers of *The Way* will welcome a descendant of John McDade's remarkable piece contributed to the *Supplement* for Hopkins' centenary in 1989. Hopkins died with his work almost completely unknown. He once explained his refusal to urge his superiors on the point by claiming that if the Lord 'chooses to avail himself of what I leave at his disposal, he can do so with a felicity and a success which I could never command'. This volume surely bears out the truth of that conviction. No other Jesuit has touched such a wide variety of people with the message of 'the dearest freshness deep down things'.

Philip Endean SJ

***Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús: Biográfico-temático*, edited by Charles E. O'Neill and Joaquín M. Domínguez (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 2001). 84-8468-036-3, 4 volumes, pp. lvi + 4110, €300.**

This major reference work gives us articles on a wide range of Jesuits (though the living are excluded). There are also extensive pieces on countries where the Society of Jesus has worked and on many of its most characteristic ministries and activities. It is no secret that the compilation of the dictionary has been a long process. Many of the contributors are long dead, and I recognise at least one of the pieces as a typescript given me in class some twenty years ago. There are eccentricities about the dictionary that will irritate some and endear it to others—you find, for instance, Ignatius in volume 2, under 'G', as the first of the Generals. Given the vicissitudes, it has nevertheless been a major achievement to get this dictionary published, and the result is surely impressive and useful. No longer will we have to go to Koch's 1934 *Jesuitenlexikon* for basic information on Jesuit biography. Even for readers without Spanish, the bibliographies will be helpful—and let us hope that plans to publish at least the biographical entries also in English come to fruition.

Philip Endean SJ